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FEBRUARY 2010

The American Conservative

**WHEN WAS
THE
LAST TIME
WE WON
A WAR?** Andrew
Bacevich



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MEET THE NEW BOSS

Ximena Ortiz's incisive, well-written article, "Going South: The Third Worlding of America" (Jan. 2010), is smack on point. Particularly in the realm of foreign policy, Mr. Obama is giving us "continuity we can believe in"—an endless, expanding war that remains firmly in the imperial mold no matter how opaque and "post-imperial" his rhetoric pretends to be. I am recommending that all my friends, Right, center, and Left, read this important analysis.

RICHARD E. RUBENSTEIN

Professor, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

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TEACHING RIGHT

The History Department of the La Salle College (now University) of my youth, during the '70s, had teachers the equivalent of graduate-school instructors: John Rossi, departmental chair, Joseph P. O'Grady, chair emeritus, Minna Weinstein, George Stow. And then we had the incomparable John Lukacs ("The Lettered Reactionary" by John Rodden & John Rossi, Dec. 2009). What a delight he was! He taught without formal notes, needing just a reminder of where he had stopped at the end of the last class. The wit, the erudition: we were exposed to one of the finest minds of his generation. It was not class. It was an experience. He taught the art of thinking critically and of resolutely defending the insights learned thereby. Most great professors are *sui generis*. John Lukacs is *sui generis* on steroids.

And of course I would be remiss were I not mention his annual wine and spirits lecture, a perennial class delight.

"You must understand," he said, "wine is a living thing. Do not worry about

pairing wine with food. If you enjoy it, drink it."

What a beautiful man.

JOHN WARING

Cheraw, S.C.

OBJECTIVISTLY WRONG

I don't believe Daniel Hannan is an Objectivist ("Ayn Shrugged," Dec. 2009). I dispute that he has a picture of Ayn Rand on his desk. These are just a few of the more blatant disjoints.

He says, "You can see every twist in the plot coming hundreds of pages before you reach it." Wrong. If you poll 100 people who just read *Atlas Shrugged* for the first time, you will find that almost all of them did not know that when Dagny descended into that valley and crashed, all the missing friends would be there, that this was "a strike," and that she would find the actual John Galt and he had caused the strike.

He continues, "Nor do the characters develop." So wrong. The whole point of the Reardon character arc is to show the toxic effect of collectivism on an otherwise strong individual and what he transforms into when the toxicity is shed.

Hannan writes, "Ask a committed Randian about the book, and he will quote one of the set-piece speeches just as a Shakespearean will quote a soliloquy. Neither is primarily interested in the narrative." First, your lie is exposed: no one with a picture of Ayn Rand on his desk calls an Objectivist or lover of Ayn Rand's thought a "Randian." Second, the above is stupidly wrong. When there is a philosophical argument at hand, we argue from the philosophy of Objectivism, much of which is colloquially explicated in the book *Atlas Shrugged*. We never quote Rand in arguments; we argue from her philosophy. We do not quote unless someone disputes she said thus and so. If you have met someone who cannot espouse Objectivism in his own words, this person might be a beginner. Objec-

tivists, true lovers of Rand's thought, love the plot and don't get tired of thinking about it. We hold the essays as a separate modality.

It's one thing to diss Ayn Rand. You people are a dime a dozen. What got me steamed is the faint praise and *a priori* fending off of letters like this through your claim to be a fan.

JOHN DONOHUE

Pasadena, Calif.

NO TIME TO READ

After reading my *TAC* "Special Book Issue," I am wondering if this publication has an editor. I am troubled at how a magazine I usually look forward to could leave me feeling so disgruntled. Not one of the book recommendations inspired me to read the book—these "best books" are described in the most snobbish, pretentious, self-aggrandizing way.

Spare me the "coming of age" memories and the "glory days" perspectives of the 60-something crowd. It is just like Baby Boomers to reflect on their own greatness and indulge themselves at the expense of those around them.

The world is crumbling at our feet, and you produce an entire issue of crap book reviews and tiresome memories? With all due respect, the nation is at a crossroads and it is time to discuss serious and pressing issues. This edition was like Woodstock for bookworms. Go write your memoirs in some Parisian coffee shop and try to impress braless bohemian girls if you must, but keep it to yourself. I've had my fill of self-destructive, self-important artists; I want to hear from the grown-ups.

STACY WEBBER

Via e-mail

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[POLITICS]

BARACK TURNS 1

It's been nearly a year since Barack Obama took the oath of office, and he's giving himself high marks—"a good solid B-plus," with plans for a generous bump to A-minus territory if his health-care bill passes.

How does he figure? The centerpiece of Obama's foreign-policy agenda is a rechristened Bush Doctrine. Thousands of soldiers are spending another Christmas in Iraq, while a new wave marches off to Afghanistan. He vows to "finish the job" without defining the job, much less justifying why it's ours. Sure, he has given some pretty speeches and collected the Nobel Committee's preemptive Peace Prize. But he hasn't laid out a compelling counter-vision.

On the homefront, Obama hasn't managed to push his healthcare package through a supermajority Senate. His cap-and-trade scheme never sputtered to life. He did buy up a bunch of old cars, but so far his recovery program seems only to be benefiting Hillary Clinton's pollster, who was paid \$6 million to create three jobs. Mainly, the president has opened the federal spigot wide enough to require Congress to raise the debt ceiling to \$14 trillion, but not so effectively as to produce any real accomplishments in return for his crushing deficits.

As for that "unprecedented level of openness in government" pledge, Obama's Justice Department has maintained the state-secrets privilege invented by the Bush administration, argued for keeping the warrantless wiretapping program, and borrowed more Bushian logic to deny public access to White House visitor logs. Legislators aren't given time to read thousand-page bills all stamped "emergency" and pushed through in late-night sessions. Gitmo's prisoners wait in vain to hear the secret evidence against them.



This wheel-spinning renders the Obama record far less radical than Republicans feared, not that they can afford to notice. And the president's own base is growing disheartened by the lack of change. While some expectations rested on real promises, more grew out of a mystical faith in transcendent personality. Now the hopeful are suffering a double blow: the president isn't going to pay their mortgages; worse, he hasn't turned the murky Potomac into wine. A year into the job, Barack Obama looks like nothing so much as a normal politician: cautious, compromising, scripted, and vain.

[WAR]

BANK OF AMERICA

When military action fails, pay off the natives. This counterinsurgency technique, aka bribery, is the new American way of war. It worked (sort of) in Iraq, so now we're trying it in Afghanistan. Just before Obama announced that he would deploy an additional 30,000 troops, we learned that the Afghan army would be given more funds to pay its troops. New recruits will get \$240 a month, rather than \$180. That doesn't quite match the Taliban's wages—our enemies offer combatants \$250-\$350, though their pension scheme is inferior. Nevertheless, Afghan recruiting sergeants reported a flurry of new applicants, prompting hopes that the U.S.

would soon fulfill its nation-building fantasy of leaving the Afghans with a state of the art, 400,000-strong security force capable of fending for itself. Cue clichés about locals "standing on their own two feet."

No Nobel Prizes for guessing who is picking up the tab. According to General Petraeus, the cost of training Afghan forces comes to \$10 billion a year. We can't expect the feckless and corrupt Afghan government to pay its way—not with an annual GDP of \$10.2 billion. President Hamid Karzai, the crook we have enthroned in Kabul, guesses that it will be 2024 before his forces have sufficient strength to keep the Taliban at bay.

That's the problem with Obama's promise to begin withdrawing from Afghanistan in 2011: this ruined nation with no real economy cannot afford—will never be able to afford—to foot the bill for the massive military we are building on its behalf. Long after we decide to decrease our troop commitment, America will be financially mired in Afghanistan. Thank goodness our economy is in such pristine shape.

[WORLD]

DUBAI'S MIRAGE

For Somalis, Iraqis, and Afghans, nation-building has come to mean bombardment and occupation by Western powers. But for other developing countries, nation-building means manmade

disasters of a different kind—the sort perpetuated by banks and real estate scams. Consider Dubai.

Driven not only by oil wealth but by a much-hyped investment boom, this tiny Gulf emirate poured billions into the ultramodern equivalent of fairytale castles: an indoor ski range (in a locale that averages 90 degrees), the world's tallest building, and an archipelago of artificial islands built to resemble a map of the world. To many Middle Easterners and Westerners, this former pearl-fishing village was the wave of the future, a bastion of progress in a part of the world hitherto immune to modernity. Its openness to the world and to the world's money were widely hailed as a model for the Mideast.

But in November, the bubble burst, as Dubai World, the state-owned holding company involved in much of the construction boom, announced it could no longer service its debt. The company brought the country to its knees—almost literally, as Dubai was reduced to begging for a bailout. Abu Dhabi rode to the rescue, but as with America's rescued banks, it's far from clear whether Dubai's troubles are over.

The Gulf emirates have been blessed with much natural wealth, but sought to improve their bounty through the magic of financialization. America's economic idealism proved almost as disastrous for Dubai as our military idealism has proved for other developing states. We in the West, no less than the sheikhs of Dubai, might do well to reconsider the creed of infinite progress—of turning desert sands into Disneyland.

[ALLIES]

JAIL FOR GANDHI

Friends of Israel complain that there is no Palestinian Gandhi or Martin Luther King, someone who uses peaceful

methods in the struggle for Palestinian liberation. Instead, after years of occupation, the Palestinians resorted to terrorism, morally repellant and politically ineffective. The implication is that the Jewish state would be happy to negotiate a just settlement with reasonable Palestinians. Sad to say, recent Israeli actions reveal the falsity of such claims.

Take, for example, the Palestinian village of Bil'in. For more than a year it has been the site of peaceful weekly protests because the Israeli separation barrier now under construction seals off the town from the land its people own and farm. In a landmark ruling, the Israeli Supreme Court decided two years ago that the wall was prejudicial to the people of Bil'in and ordered the government to reroute it. But the Israeli government ignored the ruling of its own court. Protests against the wall have garnered considerable international attention, but Israel has responded brutally.

On Dec. 9, Israeli soldiers broke into the house of Abdallah Abu Rahmah at 2 AM and seized him in front of his wife and children. He is a math teacher at the Latin Patriarchate School in Birzeit and one of the coordinators of the weekly peaceful demonstrations. Press clippings from this summer show him meeting with Desmond Tutu, Jimmy Carter, and Mary Robinson. Clearly this is a dangerous individual who must be seized in the dead of night.

While it may be too much to ask President Obama to summon the courage to petition Benjamin Netanyahu to release this teacher, Americans should understand that Israel has no tolerance for peaceful protest, even when the demonstrators are asking it to implement the injunctions of its own courts. If the Palestinians had a Gandhi, one shudders to think of how Israel would treat him. ■

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No Exit

America has an impressive record of starting wars but a dismal one of ending them well.

By Andrew J. Bacevich

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S decision to escalate U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan earned him at most two muted cheers from Washington's warrior-pundits. Sure, the president had acceded to Gen. Stanley McChrystal's request for more troops. Already in its ninth year, Operation Enduring Freedom was therefore guaranteed to endure for years to come. The Long War begun on George W. Bush's watch with expectations of transforming the Greater Middle East gained a new lease on life, its purpose reduced to the generic one of "keeping America safe."

Yet the Long War's most ardent supporters found fault with Obama's words and demeanor. The president had failed to convey the requisite enthusiasm for sending young Americans to fight and die on the far side of the world while simultaneously increasing by several hundred billion dollars the debt imposed on future generations here at home. "Has there ever been a call to arms more dispiriting, a trumpet more uncertain?" asked a querulous Charles Krauthammer. Obama ought to have demonstrated some of the old "bring 'em on" spirit that served the previous administration so well. "We cannot prevail without a commander in chief committed to success," wrote Krauthammer.

Other observers made it clear that merely prevailing was nowhere near good enough. They took Obama to task for failing to use the V-word. Where was

the explicit call for victory? "Win' is a word that Obama avoided," noted Max Boot with disapproval. The president "spoke of wanting to 'end this war successfully' but said nothing of *winning* the war." Fred Barnes of the *Weekly Standard* read off the same talking points. "The personal commitment of the president to pursue the war against the Taliban and al Qaeda until they are defeated was not there," he lamented. "...To have rallied the country and the world, Obama needed to indicate he would lead a fight to win in Afghanistan, with the help of allies if possible, but with the armed forces of the U.S. alone if necessary. He didn't say anything like that. He didn't come close."

Oddly enough, the military leaders to whom Krauthammer, Boot, and Barnes all insist that Obama should defer also eschew the V-word. McChrystal and McChrystal's boss, Gen. David Petraeus, have repeatedly said that military power alone won't solve the problems facing a country such as Afghanistan. Indeed, the counterinsurgency doctrine that Petraeus revived and that McChrystal is keen to apply in Afghanistan in effect concedes that violence alone is incapable of producing decisive and politically useful outcomes. Expend as much ammunition as you want: what today's military calls "kinetic" methods won't get you where you want to go. Acknowledging that battle doesn't work, counterinsurgency advocates call for win-

ning (or bribing) hearts and minds instead. And they'll happily settle for outcomes—take a look at Iraq, for example—that bear scant resemblance to victory as traditionally defined.

That the post-Cold War United States military, reputedly the strongest and most capable armed force in modern history, has not only conceded its inability to achieve decision but has in effect abandoned victory as its *raison d'être* qualifies as a remarkable development.

Since 1945, the United States military has devoted itself to the proposition that, Hiroshima notwithstanding, war still works—that, despite the advent of nuclear weapons, organized violence directed by a professional military elite remains politically purposeful. From the time U.S. forces entered Korea in 1950 to the time they entered Iraq in 2003, the officer corps attempted repeatedly to demonstrate the validity of this hypothesis.

The results have been disappointing. Where U.S. forces have satisfied Max Boot's criteria for winning, the enemy has tended to be, shall we say, less than ten feet tall. Three times in the last 60 years, U.S. forces have achieved an approximation of unambiguous victory—operational success translating more or less directly into political success. The first such episode, long since forgotten, occurred in 1965 when Lyndon Johnson intervened in the Dominican Republic. The second occurred in 1983, when American

troops, making short work of a battalion of Cuban construction workers, liberated Granada. The third occurred in 1989 when G.I.'s stormed the former American protectorate of Panama, toppling the government of long-time CIA asset Manuel Noriega.

Apart from those three marks in the win column, U.S. military performance has been at best mixed. The issue here is not one of sacrifice and valor—there's been plenty of that—but of outcomes.

A seesawing contest for the Korean peninsula ended in a painfully expensive draw. Kennedy's Bay of Pigs managed only to pave the way for the Cuban Missile Crisis. Vietnam produced stupendous catastrophe. Jimmy Carter's expedition to free American hostages held in Iran not only failed but also torpedoed his hopes of winning a second term. Ronald Reagan's 1983 intervention in Beirut wasted the lives of 241 soldiers, sailors, and Marines for reasons that still defy explanation. Reagan also went after Muammar Qaddafi, sending bombers to pound Tripoli; the Libyan dictator responded by blowing up Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland—and survived to tell the tale. In 1991, George H.W. Bush portrayed Operation Desert Storm as a great victory sure to provide the basis for a New World Order; in fact the first Gulf War succeeded chiefly in drawing the United States more deeply into the vortex of the Middle East—it settled nothing. With his pronounced propensity for flinging about cruise missiles and precision-guided bombs, Bill Clinton gave us Mogadishu, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo—frenetic activity with little to show in return. As for Bush and his wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the less said the better.

What are we to make of this record? For Krauthammer, Boot, and Barnes, the lessons are clear: dial up the rhetoric, increase military spending, send in

more troops, and give the generals a free hand. The important thing, writes William Kristol in his own assessment of Obama's Afghanistan decision, is to have a commander in chief who embraces "the use of military force as a key instrument of national power." If we just keep trying, one of these times things will surely turn out all right.

An alternative reading of our recent military past might suggest the following: first, that the political utility of force—the range of political problems where force possesses real relevance—is actually quite narrow; second, that definitive victory of the sort that yields a formal surrender ceremony at Appomattox or on the deck of an American warship tends to be a rarity; third, that ambiguous outcomes are much more probable, with those achieved at a cost far greater than even the most conscientious war planner is likely to anticipate; and fourth, that the prudent statesman therefore turns to force only as a last resort and only when the most vital national interests are at stake. Contra Kristol, force is an "instrument" in the same sense that a slot machine or a roulette wheel qualifies as an instrument.

To consider the long bloody chronicle of modern history, big wars and small ones alike, is to affirm the validity of these conclusions. Bellicose ideologues will pretend otherwise. Such are the vagaries of American politics that within the Beltway the views expressed by these ideologues—few of whom have experienced war—will continue to be treated as worthy of consideration. One sees the hand of God at work: the Lord obviously has an acute appreciation for irony.

In the long run, however, the nattering of Kristol and his confrères is unlikely to matter much. Far more important will be the conclusions about war and its utility reached by

those veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan who will eventually succeed Petraeus and McChrystal on the uppermost rung of the American military profession.

The impetus for weaning Americans away from their infatuation with war, if it comes at all, will come from within the officer corps. It certainly won't come from within the political establishment, the Republican Party gripped by militaristic fantasies and Democrats too fearful of being tagged as weak on national security to exercise independent judgment. Were there any lingering doubt on that score, Barack Obama, the self-described agent of change, removed it once and for all: by upping the ante in Afghanistan he has put his personal imprimatur on the Long War.

Yet this generation of soldiers has learned what force can and cannot accomplish. Its members understand the folly of imagining that war provides a neat and tidy solution to vexing problems. They are unlikely to confuse Churchillian calls to arms with competence or common sense.

What conclusions will they draw from their extensive and at times painful experience with war? Will they affirm this country's drift toward perpetual conflict, as those eagerly promoting counterinsurgency as the new American way of war apparently intend? Or will the officer corps reject that prospect and return to the tradition once represented by men like George C. Marshall, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Matthew B. Ridgway?

As our weary soldiers trek from Iraq back once more to Afghanistan, this figures prominently among the issues to be decided there. ■

Andrew J. Bacevich is professor of history and international relations at Boston University. His new book Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War is due out in the spring.

Will's Testament

The dean of conservative columnists turns to Robert Taft.

By W. James Antle III

AS BARACK OBAMA weighed his decision whether to send additional troops to Afghanistan, former Vice President Dick Cheney grew impatient. "The White House must stop dithering while America's armed forces are in danger," Cheney said. "It's time for President Obama to do what it takes to win a war he has repeatedly and rightly called a war of necessity." Most conservative commentators cheered Cheney's broadside, but George F. Will was not amused.

"A bit of dithering might have been in order before we went into Iraq in pursuit of nonexistent weapons of mass destruction," Will said on ABC's "This Week." "For a representative of the Bush administration to accuse someone of taking too much time is missing the point. We have much more to fear in this town from hasty than from slow government action." Thus the dean of Washington conservative columnists refused the helping of red meat being served up by the Spiro Agnew of our time, siding instead with a liberal Democratic president.

One might be tempted to conclude that Will has merely become the latest media figure to be starstruck by Obama, his onetime dining companion. The president has been known to send a thrill up grown men's legs before. Except that when Obama decided he would dispatch 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan after all, Will was just as scathing: "George W. Bush waged preventive war in Iraq regarding (nonexistent) weapons of mass destruction. Obama is waging preventive war in

Afghanistan to prevent it from again becoming 'a staging platform for terrorists,' which Somalia, Yemen or other sovereignty near-vacuums also could become."

Will argued in his syndicated column that to sustain such a commitment, "U.S. forces might have to be engaged in Afghanistan for decades before its government can prevent that by itself." "The president's party will not support his new policy, his budget will not accommodate it, our overstretched and worn down military will be hard-pressed to execute it, and Americans' patience will not be commensurate with Afghanistan's limitless demands for it," he concluded. "This will not end well."

The emergence of George Will as a skeptic of the hyperinterventionist foreign policy favored by many on the Right—the sorts Will describes as the "most magnificently misnamed neoconservatives" who "are the most radical people in this town"—has been one of the most surprising developments in the Washington debate. He seldom deviated from the neoliberal-to-neoconservative consensus on foreign affairs in the past, and his newfound restraint has come at an interesting time.

The deaths of William F. Buckley Jr. and Robert Novak have left Will the most respected conservative columnist in the country. Only Cal Thomas appears in more newspapers; only Will's fellow *Washington Post* scribe Charles Krauthammer is comparably influential among conservative elites. Will is unique in that he is both widely read by rank-

and-file Republicans and also widely listened to by GOP powerbrokers. But the passing of Buckley and Novak has also left Will almost alone among the top conservative columnists as a critic of foreign adventurism—Novak had opposed post-Cold War interventionism from the start, Buckley had begun to turn against it late in life.

As Will has become more outspoken in assessing the distance between conservative foreign-policy rhetoric and reality, his critics on the Right have tried harder to ostracize him as a pseudoconservative elitist along the lines of *New York Times* columnist David Brooks. After Will's first column urging U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, *Weekly Standard* editor William Kristol hit back in the *Washington Post*: "Let's be honest. Will is not calling on the United States to accept a moderate degree of success in Afghanistan, and simply to stop short of some overly ambitious goal. Will is urging retreat, and accepting defeat."

"What is fascinating is how Will writes as if Sept. 11 never happened, and the Afghan war is happening in a vacuum in which the only strategic goal is providing security and economic development for the Afghan people," wrote Jules Crittenden on his website, conceding, "though in fairness Will does, towards the end, mention the goal of denying al Qaeda bases of operation, but only in despair, to suggest it's impossible, so why try?"

In *Commentary*, former Bush pamphleteer Peter Wehner excoriated Will as a for-it-before-he-was-against-it flip-

flopper. "Mr. Will's shifting stands on these wars is vertigo-inducing," Wehner wrote. "Once upon a time, supporting the Iraq war was fashionable; large majorities of the public were behind it. So was most of the political class. And so was George Will." He continued, "Will was not just in favor of the war; he was as passionate and articulate a champion of it as you could possibly find."

On this point, Will's detractors are correct. In his columns and television appearances, Will loyally supported President Bush's decisions to invade Afghanistan and Iraq. He endorsed regime change: "We did it in Grenada, Panama, Serbia. Would the world be better off if Milosevic were back in Serbia? Noriega in Panama? I don't think so." He predicted "a happy domino effect" in the Middle East "of democracy knocking over these medieval tyrannies" and agreed with Condoleezza Rice that skepticism about this project reeked of "condescension."

Conservatives were nearly unanimous in their support for post-9/11 punitive strikes going after bin Laden and the Taliban government that sheltered him. As Pat Buchanan wrote at the time, "Let us pay back those who did this, then let us extricate ourselves." But Will explicitly touted nation-building, saying it was "part of [Bush's] education as president" to revise his "hostility to nation-building" upon seeing what occurs in failed states like Afghanistan.

Will once believed that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, convinced by Colin Powell's debunked pitch to the United Nations. He wrote at the time, "Powell's presentation, its power enhanced by his avoidance of histrionics, will change all minds open to evidence." Will also speculated that war would cost fewer Iraqi lives than continuing the sanctions regime.

Long before 9/11, there was little in Will's commentary that might suggest

he would part ways with neoconservatives. During the 1996 presidential campaign, for example, he wrote, "the Republican Party's most pressing task" was "self-defense against Pat Buchanan's redefinition of it." Buchanan, Will continued, "mixes a cocktail of resentments and ignorance unmatched since George Wallace went marauding." If anything, Will was less skeptical of government power than were other conservative columnists, writing of "statecraft as soulcraft" and dismissing eager Reaganites as "taxaphobic." On U.S. policy toward the Middle East, William F. Buckley once chided him, "If progress of any kind is going to be made in that part of the world, you don't begin by siding with Israel on every single point."

Yet Will has been inching toward a more circumscribed view of the state's potential in recent years. He has, to some extent, rethought his dissents from mainstream conservative orthodoxy on taxes and gun control. His more recent declarations of independence have come in fights between what he describes as "social-issue conservatives" versus "limited-government conservatives" and "Goldwaterism." Unlike many conservatives, Will has applied his anti-statist inclinations to foreign policy.

As early as 2003, Will was growing skeptical of democratic nation-building in Iraq. "Iraq needs only four people to achieve post-Saddam success," he wrote. "Unfortunately they are George Washington, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Marshall." Like most Americans, his view of the wars became grimmer as he was confronted with the facts on the ground—without bin Laden's head or WMD, the *casus belli* seemed less compelling.

In the fall of 2009, Will wrote back-to-back columns calling for American withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq.

He observed that "nation-building would be impossible even if we knew how, and even if Afghanistan were not the second-worst place to try." Will arrived at the same conclusion concerning Iraq. "If, in spite of contrary evidence, the U.S. surge permanently dampened sectarian violence, *all* U.S. forces can come home sooner than the end of 2011," he wrote. "If, however, the surge did not so succeed, U.S. forces *must* come home sooner." Will thus adopted a stricter standard for the surge's success than its boosters did: the surge worked only if it created conditions that allow us to extricate ourselves from Iraq with a minimum of American and Iraqi bloodshed.

The question is what influence Will's evolving views will have over the foreign-policy debate. Had he taken these positions from the very beginning, he might have convinced a few more wavering Republicans—think Chuck Hagel—to vote against invading Iraq. Certainly, he would have made it harder to dismiss antiwar conservatives as unpatriotic cranks (though not impossible, as we learned from the treatment of Robert Novak). What impact can he have now?

Alex Koppelman of *Salon* argued, "it's almost certainly not going to be a Cronkite and Vietnam moment" because "Will doesn't hold the sway he used to" among the Republican faithful. To some extent this is true; Will is no Rush Limbaugh. But his newspaper and *Newsweek* columns are more widely read than most of his critics. Now that these are Obama's wars, Republicans are more open to voting against funding them and declaring them lost. The GOP has a new incentive to distance itself from Middle East failures. Perhaps George Will has shown the way. ■

W. James Antle III is associate editor of The American Spectator.

Secret Police

Can personal privacy survive the digital revolution?

By Brian Doherty

CIVIL LIBERTARIANS hoped that the Obama era would see a renewed commitment to privacy protections. But their dreams are being dashed. Congress seems likely to recess without adjusting aspects of the Patriot Act set to expire at the end of the year, which means that the existing law will be temporarily extended. Elements up for reconsideration include roving wiretaps in foreign intelligence investigations that are not targeted to a specific communication mode or person and “section 215” ability to seize business or other records in a presumptive terror investigation.

Different bills to reform these and other powers have come out of the Judiciary Committees of the House and Senate. The House version is slightly better in terms of demands it makes on law enforcement and intelligence agencies to have defensible reasons for their searches and seizures. But the controversial provisions will survive, even if slightly circumscribed.

So will other post-9/11 surveillance practices. Candidate Obama swore that under his reign, Americans would see “no more National Security Letters to spy on citizens who are not suspected of a crime.” But his administration has shown no desire to relieve itself of NSL powers. National Security Letters allow FBI agents to grab records and information about you from third parties without any judicial supervision. The recipients are legally prohibited from telling anyone other than their lawyers that they gave up the information.

The Patriot reauthorization debate

unfolded as the telecommunications industry, already known for craven capitulation to the National Security Agency’s warrantless wiretapping program, was revealed by researcher Chris Soghoian to be continuing to cooperate with law enforcement against customers’ interests at a level that, in the words of a request from Yahoo! to keep its collaboration quiet, would “shock” customers and “shame” telcos.

Sprint Nextel, for example, provided the government with GPS locations of its subscribers via their cell-phone signals 8 million times between September 2008 and October 2009. As Soghoian writes, telecom and Internet providers “all have special departments, many open 24 hours per day, whose staff do nothing but respond to legal requests. Their entire purpose is to facilitate the disclosure of their customers’ records to law enforcement and intelligence agencies.” Verizon, objecting to a FOIA request by Soghoian, expressed concern that subscribers might start bothering it to provide information dumps that the company only provides for cops. Verizon also worried that customers would ask whether their info was being coughed up to law enforcement. Of course, Verizon would not tell them.

These two stories—Patriot reauthorization and telco cooperation—frame the battlefield on which American privacy is being slaughtered. On one end is a government that wants to suck up as much information as it can with as little oversight as possible. On the other end are private companies—to which we entrust more and more information

about what we are saying, writing, buying, and thinking—that in effect act as government information agencies.

So many alarming procedures and plans that impact Americans’ privacy—our ability to move through the world without giving up information to authorities, whether knowingly or unaware—are either in the works or already implemented that if you talk to 10 different privacy-rights advocates, you hear 10 different primary worries. A big one, the de facto national ID card created through the “Real ID” system—a set of federal demands on security and verification measures on state ID’s—has been effectively killed by grassroots federalism: states just refused to go along, and the federal government had pretty much given up, despite the law having passed in 2005. But the Senate is now considering a revival of most of Real ID’s features through the PASS ID act, which the ACLU’s Christopher Calabrese characterizes as “the government giving us a permission slip on whether you can engage in the right to travel, and potentially to work or vote or even own a gun.”

Republicans, both in Congress and in the grassroots, don’t seem particularly concerned with these issues. As Julian Sanchez, who studies privacy and technology issues for the Cato Institute, noted, “Thus far, the approved conservative position appears to have been that Barack Obama is some kind of ruthless Stalinist with a secret plan to turn the United States into a massive gulag—but under no circumstances should there be any additional checks on his administration’s domestic spying powers.”

Meanwhile the privacy-advocacy community often conflates privacy threats from government with those from marketers. The information-collection practices that alarm privacy mavens range from such seemingly innocuous practices as supermarket discount cards—which create permanent records of your buying habits—to things as creepy as tracing and saving Internet searches and webpage visits to generate ads computer-calculated to fit a data-derived image of “you.” But these schemes are ultimately dedicated to nothing more sinister than trying to sell you things.

Government, on the other hand, can do things to you, or deny you the right to do things, based on the information it captures. This might seem to create a clear-cut free-market line between when information-gathering is a public-policy issue and when it isn’t. But the situation is more complicated than that. Private information-gathering companies such as Choice-Point make a lot of money selling their data to ... the government. A 2006 GAO study found \$30 million being spent by just four government agencies on services from private information brokers.

Assaults on our ability to keep facts about ourselves to ourselves come from both private and public directions, and in many cases it’s hard to distinguish. At the heart is what privacy researcher James Rule of UC Berkeley, author of *Privacy in Peril*, identifies as our tendency to embrace, or at least accept, any data-collection or surveillance system as long as we think it has utilitarian benefit.

The cell phone is emblematic of our modern approach to privacy. In the space of a decade, it has gone from expensive rarity to perceived necessity. It keeps us connected everywhere we go, which most now think of as a blessing (and even many who acknowledge it as a curse feel unable to escape). But a cell phone creates a record of exactly where you have been via the signals it

pings back to cell towers, a record that is generally available to government investigators with ease, though lower courts have tried to establish standards for the circumstances and methods by which the government can get that data. Even turning your phone off won’t necessarily keep it from being a silent betrayer of your every step; you either need to take the battery out or—if this can be contemplated—leave it at home.

The cell phone is the most extreme example of the trail we create in pursuit of convenience. Such data-hungry sectors as credit and insurance also Hoover up information about us, but the efficiencies they provide would be difficult for most of us to live without. The credit-information industry in particular creates an interesting irony: by gathering so much about our private financial behavior in a faraway database, making decisions based on it, and often trading that information to others, these companies allow access to credit with greater face-to-face privacy since, unlike a century ago, a merchant need know nothing about our probity, wealth, family, or job before extending credit, as long as MBNA vouches for us.

In the realm of business interactions—from cell phones to credit cards to our search-engine use—we see privacy crumbling beneath the weight of a conflicting need. The same dynamic drives government surveillance, though the need is not ours but the state’s. Even before the massive security apparatus erected after 9/11, government’s desire to punish Americans for the sale or possession of certain drugs was dramatically reducing historic protections. Among the privacy-damaging precedents we owe to the war on drugs are the “good faith” exception for illegally obtained evidence; warrantless searches of private, clearly posted land; warrantless monitoring of yards via low-flying helicopters; and searches via sniffing dog without probable cause.

Various other public-policy needs are pushing us in the direction of more government data collection, monitoring, and verification—the classic “your papers, please” measures that have long evoked tyranny. The desire to ensure illegal immigrants can’t work feeds the “E-Verify” data system, currently voluntary but possibly soon to be part of comprehensive immigration reform (and requiring a true national biometric ID card to achieve its goal). Border security has led to easily hackable RFID chips in our passports and warrantless searches of our computers. The desire for safety feeds such privacy-wrecking expedients as public closed-circuit TV (with local programs often funded by the federal Department of Homeland Security) and whole-body imaging scanners at airports (150 new ones being rolled out this year).

The government’s law-enforcement goals result in data collection even outside the politically controversial Patriot Act provisions. The FBI has its National Security Branch Analysis Center, which as a September 2009 *Wired* story reported, “maintains a hodgepodge of data sets packed with more than 1.5 billion government and private-sector records about citizens and foreigners, the documents show, bringing the government closer than ever to implementing the ‘Total Information Awareness’ system first dreamed up by the Pentagon in the days following the Sept. 11 attacks.” (The FBI also has its own telecom listening program, the Digital Collection Systems Network.) Then there’s FinCEN, which in the words of the privacy watchdog organization Privacilla, “handles more than 140 million computerized financial records compiled from 21,000 depository institutions and 200,000 nonbank financial institutions. Banks, casinos, brokerage firms and money transmitters all must file reports with FinCEN on cash transactions over \$10,000. And FinCEN is the repository for ‘Suspicious Activity

Intelligence reports did not play any role in President Obama's decision to increase dramatically levels of troops in Afghanistan

because they did not support the premise that 30,000 more soldiers would make any difference. Both CIA and State Department intelligence said that the Taliban had exploited domestic issues to increase its presence in Afghanistan, expanding from half of the country's provinces to over 80 percent, including areas dominated by ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks previously considered secure. Several detailed reports about top-level corruption involving senior members of the government, as well as Karzai family members, were dismissed by the White House as being "unhelpful." According to analysts who observed the deliberative process, the decision to surge was actually made several months ago, though there was considerable debate over exactly how to use the new soldiers and how to package the move for the American public to minimize political fallout. The timing of the announcement was initially delayed to permit Afghanistan to have a successful presidential election and then delayed again so as not to interfere with passage of a healthcare plan.



One of the most corrupt practices engaged in by U.S. presidents is the appointment of campaign contributors as ambassadors to important overseas posts.

No other country rewards supporters in quite the same way because placing someone completely ignorant of local issues in a key diplomatic position has serious consequences. But more than half of the 80 ambassadorships filled by Barack Obama have gone to campaign donors rather than State Department professionals, a percentage close to that of George W. Bush, who was regarded as particularly bad about handing out political and diplomatic jobs to cronies. The new ambassadors in Britain, France, and Germany are all major Democratic Party donors.



Yet another American spy for Israel appears to have disappeared from the mainstream media and the criminal justice system.

Early this year, U.S. government scientist Stewart Nozette admitted to an FBI agent in a sting operation that he had already passed classified information through contacts in Israel's aerospace industry. Nozette, who demanded an Israeli passport, agreed to provide more classified material to Mossad in exchange for money. The media covered the story from the arrest on Oct. 19 on a charge of attempted espionage until a pretrial hearing 11 days later. But at that point, it disappeared down the memory hole, where most stories about Israeli espionage tend to wind up. Nozette was supposed to return to U.S. District Court in Washington on Nov. 10, but nothing seems to have happened. The court website has no information on Nozette, and calls to the court clerks requesting clarification of his status were not returned. Last year, Ben Ami Kadish, an engineer who had worked for Picatinny Arsenal in New Jersey and who had provided classified information to Israel, similarly went into limbo after being charged. He eventually resurfaced and was fined, receiving no prison time for espionage and virtually no press coverage.

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Reports' which must be filed by financial institutions under the Bank Secrecy Act." There are deadbeat-dad databases, criminal-record databases, and "secure flight" systems to check us at airports.

But the mother of all privacy violations in its potential scope is the NSA warrantless wiretapping program codified through the FISA Amendment Act of 2008. That project, as Kevin Bankston of the Electronic Frontier Foundation says, switched American surveillance from a model where investigators "picked a target and wiretapped that person" to "a wholesale model where we essentially wiretap everyone." It's the realization of the vision of your most paranoid friend, quite sure that every single phone call, e-mail, and website visited is marked, recorded, and examined by spooks.

That nightmare, Bankston says, "is not paranoia." It is at the root of lawsuits against both the NSA and AT&T after a whistleblower revealed that the NSA really did have a secret room built into a major AT&T center in San Francisco to grab all its Internet traffic. While the extent of this brazen program shocked some, the principle has been built into American telecommunications law since 1994's Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act, which required telecom companies to design their systems to allow government eavesdropping. And Fourth Amendment restrictions against searches and seizures don't apply to information given freely to a third party, including any telecom system sending your messages along.

It's hard to know how many people are harmed by such programs. In one ACLU suit against the practice, a District Court threw out the case since none of the plaintiffs could prove he had been specifically victimized—because the program is secret.

The legal and philosophical debates about privacy continue. What standards

Continued on page 50

Ron Paul's Bank War

THE DECADES-LONG CAMPAIGN of Ron Paul to have the Government Accountability Office do a full audit of the Federal Reserve now has 313 sponsors in the House. Sometimes perseverance does pay off. If not derailed by the establishment, the audit may happen. Yet many columnists and commentators are aghast.

An auditors' probe, they wail, would imperil the Fed's independence and expose it to pressure from Congress to keep interest rates low and money flowing when the need of the nation and economy might call for tightening.

They cite Paul Volcker, who to squeeze double-digit inflation out of the economy in the late Carter and early Reagan years drove the prime rate to 21 percent, causing the worst recession since the Depression. Volcker, they claim, prepared the ground for the Reagan tax cuts and seven fat years of prosperity.

That decade, America created 20 million jobs—and another 22 million in the Clinton era. Without Volcker putting the economy through the wringer, it could not have happened. And had he been forced to explain his decisions, Congress would have broken his policy.

Such is the case for Fed independence. But if true, what does this say about our Republic?

Is it not an admission that, though Congress was created by the Constitution, and the Fed is a creation of Congress, our elected representatives cannot be trusted with the money supply, cannot be trusted with control of the nation's central bank? To have decisions made in the national interest, we need folks who do not have to answer to voters.

If this be true, the Republic is closer to its end than its beginning, when

Thomas Jefferson said, "In questions of power, let us hear no more of trust in men, but rather bind them down from mischief with the chains of the Constitution."

Others contend that were it not for the independence and vision of Fed Chair Ben Bernanke, the economy might have gone over the cliff and into the abyss after the Lehman Brothers collapse in October 2008.

What opponents of Paul's audit are thus saying is that elected legislators must be kept out of the temple where the great decisions about the economy are made, that these decisions must rest with bankers and economists—answerable, as is the Supreme Court, to themselves and no one else.

But has the performance of the Fed been so brilliant that any intrusion upon its privacy is sacrilege?

Among the failures of the Fed is the Great Depression. As Milton Friedman related in his *Monetary History of the United States*, for which he won a Nobel Prize for Economics, the Fed hugely expanded the money supply in the mid-to-late 1920s.

Following a path of least resistance, the money flowed into the equity markets, where stocks could be bought on 10 percent margin. The market soared, and a huge bubble was created. When it popped, scores of thousands of investors conducted a run on the banks to get their money out to meet their margin calls. Thousands of banks, short on cash, closed. One-third of the money supply was wiped out, and the Fed failed to replenish the lost blood. Thus did the Fed cause the Great Depression. Smoot and Hawley were framed.

Moreover, every bubble from the dot-com boom of the late 1990s to housing

in the 2000s is a result of Fed policy. For unless there is an excess of money sloshing around, funds that surge into one market, be it housing, stocks, or Third World loans, have to come out of another.

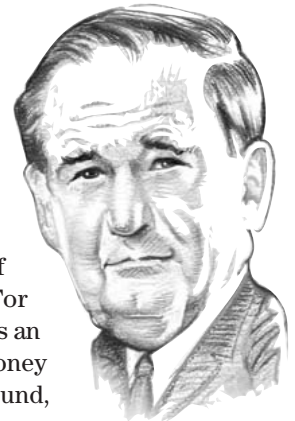
Moreover, if the Fed has not failed dismally in its duty to keep prices stable, how come candy bars and Cokes that cost a nickel in the 1950s cost 50 or 75 cents today, and new Cadillacs that sold for \$3,200 in the late 1940s cost \$55,000 or \$60,000 now? Who is responsible for inflation if not the Fed?

Moreover, it is now conceded that the Fed, in the early years of this 21st century, kept interest rates near 1 percent for too long and created the bubble that popped in 2008 and almost brought down our own and the global economies.

Because the Fed can create money out of thin air, we have been able to wage wars on credit, shovel out trillions in foreign aid, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund loans, and run humongous budget and trade deficits that have brought our country to the brink of ruin.

And if Bernanke is a genius, how is it he didn't see the train wreck coming and had to double-time it to the Hill with Hank Paulson to plead for \$700 billion to bail out AIG, Fannie, and Freddie and buy all that rotten paper on the books of Citibank & Co.?

The greatest economy the world has ever seen has been horribly mismanaged and virtually ruined by the decisions of presidents, Congress, and the Federal Reserve. Main Street has been wiped as Wall Street was bailed out. Why? Bring on the auditors! ■



Far Wrong

Don't be fooled by the BNP.

By Peter Hitchens

THE LIVES OF GENUINE conservatives in Britain have been made much harder by the recent growth of the British National Party, a sordid and disreputable group with its origins in racial obsessions and Holocaust denial. Its success, achieved by faked reasonableness and slick PR, has seemed to confirm the liberal Left's view that the Right is just one step away from Hitlerism, steeped in prejudice and loutish stupidity. This is a grave burden to proper, patriotic conservatives, and I am ceaselessly amazed at how many people are taken in. Perhaps a few words of explanation and background are in order for any on the far side of the Atlantic who might have been beguiled.

Imagine a political party where the ex-leader launches an investigation into his successor because he thinks he may be Jewish. There is, in fact, no need to imagine. The British National Party's podgy chieftain, Nick Griffin, actually had his ancestry probed for alleged Jewishness by the organization's former Fuehrer, the late John Tyndall.

Tyndall was the sort of neo-Nazi who used to celebrate Adolf Hitler's birthday, dress up in Stormtrooper outfits for group photographs and, for all I know, picnics in the woods. This sort of thing is rather bad for public relations in a country where significant numbers of people still think of Hitler as the man who bombed their street or whose parents and grandparents spent several uncomfortable years fighting on land and sea and in the air.

So when the BNP sought a new and

more appealing image a few years ago, Tyndall had to go. He did not appreciate this treatment. Then one day, sulky Mr. Tyndall saw Mr. Griffin's father on TV and decided that the old gentleman's nose was (in his view) suspiciously prominent and curved. In the spirit of his movement and his dogma, he began making checks to see if Griffin's grandmother was "in order," as they used to say in the Third Reich. I know this because Griffin told me about it himself, during a long, faintly unhinged conversation in a public house in an English country town. (I drank beer. He didn't.) I have not spoken to him since, and Tyndall is now dead, so I have never been able to find out how the story ended, though I very much hope that Nick Griffin does in fact have Jewish forebears, as I do myself. It would add to the dark comedy of his political career and perhaps cause him to reflect on some of his beliefs.

None of this ought to matter. Since the 1930s, Britain has had some sort of Judeophobic, jackboot-loving political formation or other. In general, these organizations have been composed of fantasists and obsessives, plus a sprinkling of violent brutes looking for a brawl, appealing particularly to those who think the Jews are to blame for everything. They have until now made no important electoral impact.

The first was the overrated British Union of Fascists, led by the disappointed socialist Sir Oswald Mosley, which never became a serious force even in those hungry and ill-tempered

years. Only the British Left, which fondly likes to think that it stopped Sir Oswald in his tracks, maintains the myth that he was a genuine threat—a myth that is often perpetuated on British TV and in school histories of the period, heavily influenced by leftist ideas.

But the BUF, which predated knowledge of the National Socialist death camps, was significant compared with the various leagues, fronts, and movements that persisted on the edge of British politics throughout the contented and consensual period that lasted from 1945 until quite recently. The Nazi association restricted them to the twilight badlands of minority politics. They grew slightly as Britain experienced major migration from the West Indies and from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Factions based upon racial bigotry are uniquely well-placed to exploit the problems that such influxes create, since they do not fear the possible cruel consequences of inflammatory talk and because race is the foundation of all their thought—and the limit of it, too. But the mainstream parties responded to this flurry by introducing some restrictions on migrants and so temporarily halted and reversed the expansion of specifically anti-immigration groups.

What they did not do, because it was too difficult and because they preferred not to think about it, was to confront the real problem of mass migration—the great "Who, Whom?" question that any country must answer if it wishes to open its borders to large numbers of people

from other cultures. Should the migrants adapt to their new home? Or should the host country adapt to the newcomers? By leaving this unanswered, Britain passively chose the second path, but in a messy, ill-organized and clumsy way that has created seriously divided communities in many cities.

After a while, this cowardice got mixed up with the multiculturalist movement. Originating mainly among 1960s radicals, it sought to cancel traditional British patriotism because it hated such feelings. Now it had a standing excuse for doing so. The teaching of traditional British history was deemed “racist” and “offensive” and so stopped. Christianity had to be taught as one among many religions, even in nominally Christian schools. Opposition to such measures was invariably dismissed as a form of racial prejudice, which it sometimes was but often wasn’t, frightening many decent people into silence and in too many cases leaving the argument to actual racial bigots.

Of course this is, like so many other problems of the major Western nations, the result of the failure of the major conservative parties. Britain’s Conservatives largely avoided the subject of race and culture for two reasons. One, they had no intellectual confidence in their own ideas and were afraid of articulating them. Two, their party contained many economic liberals who favored “free movement of peoples” and saw multiculturalism as an acceptable price for the alleged benefits of mass migration. Such benefits are, of course, felt mainly by the well-off, the sort of people who eat in restaurants rather than work in them. But such people also tend to form the political and media classes everywhere and certainly in London. Recently one such person, a former Labour Party apparatchik called Andrew Neather, startlingly blurted out

the truth about the views of this milieu. Neather wrote a newspaper article praising immigration as an unmixed good, mainly because it provided lots of cheap nannies and gardeners for funky Londoners like him.

Apparently thinking nobody would notice, he then revealed that among his party colleagues there had been “a driving political purpose: that mass immigration was the way that the UK Government was going to make the UK truly multicultural.” He recalled coming away from high-level discussions “with a clear sense that the policy was intended—even if this wasn’t its main purpose—to rub the Right’s nose in diversity and render their arguments out of date.” This happened around the last time the British Conservative Party dared to raise the issue of mass immigration in the months before the 2001 general election. The tactic worked. The Tories not only abandoned the subject, they have since been too frightened to mention it.

This retreat has allowed Nick Griffin and the British National Party to become not important but significant. In the absence of a principled conservative party, they have quite successfully pretended to be such a thing, gradually adopting large numbers of policies—including opposition to the Iraq War—that a genuinely conservative party would have espoused. They have also posed as the foes of Islam, a religion that is increasingly present in British cities. Griffin says Islam is “a wicked and vicious faith,” but in 1988 he traveled to Libya, allegedly at the expense of Muammar Gaddafi’s government, in search of funds for another neo-Nazi organization to which he then belonged. Though he says he now accepts that Jews were murdered under the National Socialist Third Reich—apparently he reached this conclusion thanks to reading British intercepts of German radio traffic—Griffin remains coy in his atti-

tude toward the Holocaust. He claimed unconvincingly during a recent TV appearance that he might be prosecuted if he explained his views. What is recorded is that he did at one point say, “I am well aware that the orthodox opinion is that six million Jews were gassed and cremated and turned into lampshades. Orthodox opinion also once held that the world is flat.” It is necessary to remember here that Griffin—despite his loping, limited associates, his phalanx of huge shaven-headed bodyguards, and his doubts and difficulties about Jews—is an educated man, with a law degree from Cambridge University. Yet he cannot get these strange obsessions under control or convincingly state that he has finished with them, even when by doing so he might enjoy mainstream political success.

Similarly, the BNP constitution gives away the party’s true driving purpose and leaves no doubt about its real nature. It restricts membership to those of British or “closely kindred European descent.” Paradoxically, Britain’s embryonic Thought Police, a body called the Equality and Human Rights Commission, is now pressing the BNP to open its membership to all, which will actually make it far harder for its critics to show conclusively that it is based upon racial bigotry. But there is more.

Griffin was famously recorded—the event is viewable on YouTube—explaining his strategy to an American audience, while sharing a platform with the former Klansman David Duke. He explained in detail that the BNP’s new smooth appearance was a tactic, not a genuine change. As he said, “There’s a difference between selling out your ideas and selling your ideas. And the BNP isn’t about selling out its ideas, which are your ideas, too, but we are determined now to sell them. That means basically to use the saleable

words. As I say, freedom, security, identity, democracy. Nobody can criticize them. Nobody can come at you and attack you on those ideas. They are saleable.

"Perhaps one day, once—by being rather more subtle—we've got ourselves in a position where we control the British broadcasting media, the British people might change their mind and say, 'Yes, every last one must go.'

"But if you offer that as your sole aim to start with, you're gonna get absolutely nowhere. So, instead of talking about racial purity, we talk about identity."

This public-relations strategy has been quite successful. The BNP has managed to do fairly well in winning seats on town councils in many parts of Britain, especially where immigrant populations are high. These councillors have seldom been very effective once elected, but their election shows that there is now a significant number of disaffected voters prepared to defy or ignore taunts of "Nazi," so discontented are they about their neglect by the major parties. In elections for the European Parliament, conducted on a low poll and on a proportional representation system that, unlike normal British Parliamentary elections, favors minority parties, the BNP has just won two seats, its first serious electoral success.

As a result of this, Griffin was recently invited to appear on the BBC's principal national political debate program, "Question Time." In the eyes of most viewers, he made a fool of himself almost every time he opened his mouth. But in the eyes of others, he was treated unfairly and denied the chance to make his case. His career is not over yet.

For actual conservatives opposed on principle to multiculturalism and mass immigration and desiring radical cultural and moral change, Griffin's party is a major nuisance and quite possibly a disaster. It is exactly what the liberal

Left wants and believes a conservative movement to be, and exactly what it ought not to be—bigoted, ugly, disreputable, and tainted by past sympathy for Nazis and Fascists. And, alas, its crude, opportunistic simplicities appeal to the resentful victims of the liberal consensus.

It is easy to make two mistakes about such movements. One is to overrate them and to broadcast panicky Brechtian warnings about the rise of a new Nazism. The other is to underrate them and assume that they will get nowhere. In the current state of British politics, when the official Conservative Party is

now almost wholly in the hands of multiculturalists, moral relativists, globalists, and political correctness, there may soon be room for a new formation that rejects these ideas on respectable, civilized grounds. But if no such new grouping emerges, and if our shaky economy takes another nasty turn, Nick Griffin's rough beast may have a future of some kind—and not a pleasant one. ■

Peter Hitchens is a columnist for the London Mail on Sunday and the author of The Abolition of Britain. His next book, The Rage Against God, will be published in the spring by Zondervan.

Colonial Gingrichburg

By Newt Gingrich

The American Conservative is privileged to publish this excerpt from Newt Gingrich's latest volume of historical fiction, coauthored by Chase Madar.

IT WAS A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT. Gen. George Washington thought he had never been so drenched as his boat plied the ice-choked Delaware River toward Trenton to make a desperate surprise attack on the Hessian troops of King George. Even for December, it was unseasonably horrid weather, with rain turning into sleet turning into snow.

No, it was definitely not the best Christmas ever this year of 1776. With morale dangerously low, how could his troops, sick, ragged and undersupplied, ever defeat the British and their ruthless mercenaries?

"Excuse me, General sir?" said a voice redolent of bold, game-changing ideas. "May I have the floor?"

The speaker was Lt. Crispus N. Ginnutt, a citizen-soldier and nut farmer from

Georgia. In all the 13 colonies, a more loyal patriot could not be found.

Though no longer young, Ginnutt still possessed fine good looks, with nary a hint of a paunch nor surplus chin wattle. He was gifted with such charm and vigor as to make all the maids blush in their bonnets, though wenching did not accord with his famously strict moral compass, and neither for that matter did lying, accepting bribes, wagering on games of chance, drinking spirits, misusing tax-exempt funds, nor gazing on the naughty pictures sold by General Lafayette's troops, especially not on the Sabbath.

Crispus Ginnutt's square and manly head was framed on three sides by an indomitable mane of silvery hair, and his eagle eyes were browed with rich ebony tufts. His high tenor voice, oft praised for its silken amiability, did pierce the squalling night as if ringing out in an enthralled meetinghouse.

"General Washington, sir, it seems the

problem with this military campaign is a lack of big, positive ideas to get this young nation moving again. Allow me to float three innovative policy solutions that are long overdue.

- Replace the three-cornered hat with more efficient uni-cornered hats and mandate that haberdashers use the time and labor saved to run workhouses for war orphans, for the manufacture of nutcrackers, nut brittles, and nut hatches for export.
- Divert resources from this War of Independence into a national War on Hemp—for the sake of our children, this is one challenge we can't ignore.
- Take what I call a more holistic approach to religious tolerance, requiring Quakers, Shakers, Deists, and Unitarians to affirm their faith in a more mainstream, traditional form of Christianity (of their own choosing, of course) that is less offensive to decent Americans than their current belief systems.

"Folks, if all these years of colonial rule have taught us anything, it's that real problems require real solutions!"

"Lieutenant, you are a haversack stuffed full of clever schemes," said George Washington with great enthusiasm. "Carry on," implored the General. "That's an order!"

"Thank you, General. I'd like to suggest some bold, strategic innovations that will energize the troops—and the nation.

- First, eliminate wasteful spending on the Continental Army's field hospital bureaucracy and replace it with a personalized, individual-responsibility-based system that encourages the avoidance of typhus, gangrene, and bullet-wounds through a comprehensive

wellness program further incentivized by tax credits and flogging.

- Second, it is imperative that we conquer the Nubian duchy of Timbuktu (partnering with the Prussian Empire and the Kingdom of Fiji) and fast-track it to become the 14th colony. Make no mistake, our national security depends on it."

At this, the General interrupted. "Er, very well, Lieutenant Gingnutt, but might it not be wiser to avoid entangling alli—"

But the words did not leave his mahogany dentures, for just then did the squall toss a cold wet wave into General Washington's face, as if God in His wisdom wanted the Georgian citizen-sage to continue his counsel for the guidance of this young and blessed nation.

"And if I may finish, my third point—"

- After defeating the Barbary Pirates on the North African shore, we should take possession of their hinterlands, establishing a colony of our own there to be named New Gingnutt, Gingnuttlandia, or St. Gingnutt-by-the-Sea. My personal preference is for the third option.

"Only with such NextGen leadership and forward-planning will the United States be able to compete effectively in the 19th century. Folks, the choice is ours!"

But not everyone in the heaving vessel was satisfied with Crispus Gingnutt's innovative policy solutions. One long-haired, grimy, patchouli-scented corporal could scarce contain his anti-American wrath. "How now, Lieutenant, invade the wastes of Araby? Have you gone off your nut, my dear Ging—"

But before the naysayer could finish his spiteful diatribe, Crispus had drawn his flintlock rifle and shot the man, whom he had long suspected, and no doubt correctly, of spying for the British,

and what's more, for being a catamite and a Mahometan. He dumped the traitor's corpse overboard into the icy river.

"So long—and best fishes," said Crispus, wittily, as the troops erupted into raucous huzzahs and tossed their hats high into the air.

"By gum, master Gingnutt, such bold ideas as you give tongue to do make my own pamphlets seem like so much chopped offal," exclaimed Tom Paine, who also happened to be on board. "Methinks you shall inspire many other glorious feats from this young nation! Will you someday lead it as our president or monarch or chief executive?"

Crispus Gingnutt flashed a winning but exceedingly humble smile—it was not the first time he had been so esteemed. Truly, he heard all too clearly the call to lead this young nation, which needed him so badly. On the other hand, he might be of even greater use by returning to his nut farm and selflessly hatching other innovative policy solutions for the immeasurable benefit of his country.

A vexing dilemma, with so much hanging in the balance!

Presently, General Washington's boat did furrow the ice-choked river no more as it reached the eastern shore of the Delaware, depositing crew and passengers to safety and onward to historic victory in Trenton.

And our nation has been the better for such safe passage. For the gale-tossed boat did hold within its gunwales a man of great destiny—not to mention George Washington, who was also an important figure in his own right. ■

Newt Gingrich was speaker of the House from 1995-99. With William R. Forstchen, Ph.D., he has authored six history-based novels, including Gettysburg, Grant Comes East, and Pearl Harbor. Chase Madar is a lawyer in New York.

Dawson's Creed

The Catholic historian is all but ignored by today's academics, but his providentially informed work will outlast them all.

By Dermot Quinn

HISTORIANS COME IN ALL different shapes and sizes. The well-known ones, those mass-market storytellers we invite into our homes by way of television or bestseller, display enough variety to suit most tastes. There's David McCullough, courtly and urbane as a Renaissance bishop; Ken Burns, bearded and earnest in the required PBS manner; Michael Beschloss, bronzed and well-coiffed as a matinee star; Simon Schama, smooth and subtle. If the past is a foreign country, these are its friendly, unthreatening ambassadors, anecdotal, unflappable, fairly bursting with middlebrow sagacity. They are the bland leading the bland, and none of us is much worse for their agreeable, undemanding guidance.

Away from the cameras, less glamorous historians play their part in making the past present—graduate students, assistant professors, archivists, librarians. These are the meek who will not inherit the earth but who labor mightily hard to understand it. Not as famous or as well paid as the big shots, they are actually more important. Without them, our civic life would be a wasteland of forgetfulness, a cultural desert. They tell us who we are by telling us where we came from. They unsettle our pieties, question our assumptions. To be sure, strange ideas sometimes circulate when three or four of them get together. Their politics are often more to the Left than the Right. On the whole, though, these are serious people who

demand serious attention. Spare them a thought at Barnes and Noble. They know more than you think.

Why is it, then, that for all the variety, for all the different voices, something is not right with the way we do history in this country today? You can sniff it in the air—the divorce between the profession and the public; the sheer venom of various ideological disputes; the unending battle between naïve readings of American history in which all is white and critical ones in which all is black; the argument, increasingly tiresome, between “history” and “herstory”; the fact that readers want stories and professors refuse to tell them. When Napoleon defined history as “lies agreed upon,” he could not have known, 200 years later, that we would not even agree upon the lies. The chattering classes are chattering themselves to death and, increasingly, no one is listening.

One sign of the problem is that the work of Christopher Dawson is nowhere to be seen in this wilderness of choice. Born in 1889 and dying in 1970, Dawson has disappeared from the historical profession as if he had never graced it, and this says more about it than it says about him. He was, after all, one of those rare figures who bridged the gap between “serious” and “popular” history, a gap he considered insulting and designed to keep the public in its place. He was also, indisputably, a giant in his field: first holder of the Chauncey Stillman chair of Roman Catholic Studies at Harvard; Gif-

ford Lecturer at Edinburgh University not once but twice; prolific and powerful investigator of the relationship between religion and culture; editor of the *Dublin Review*. In his day, Dawson's works sold in the hundreds of thousands, and they were serious books for serious people, not the kind of pabulum that is popular today. Along with Chesterton, he was one of the best known Catholic converts of the middle 20th century. His tutor at Oxford ranked him alongside Lord Acton in historical genius. Cardinal Cushing of Boston, admittedly not a member of American Historical Association, called him “one of those rare human spirits who stands back from the world in which he lives and takes the true measure of time and man.”

This Christopher Dawson was a deeper thinker, a more compelling intellect, a more morally urgent voice than almost all of his contemporaries put together. Yet on whose syllabus is he found today? Have our senior professors heard of him? Our undergraduates? Our literary editors? I doubt it. That is their loss, and ours. If the profession were to rediscover him, it might rediscover itself.

Part of his obscurity, to be fair, has to do with his personality. Dawson was an English academic of a certain kind—tweedy, bespectacled, pipe-smoking, shy. His students found him friendly but formidable, impossibly well read and hard to keep up with. His readers

admired his work but found it slightly Victorian, the prose old-fashioned, the high-mindedness daunting, the scholarship monumental. There was a touch of the wing-collar about it. In private Dawson was gentle, humorous, a little melancholy. In print he could be fierce and unforgiving. Like Samuel Johnson, he argued for victory, and like Johnson, he usually succeeded. If he has been forgotten, it is because many of us are embarrassed by his brilliance and unsettled by his zeal. We would rather keep him at a distance than deal with his quietly devastating intellectual honesty.

But there is more to his current demise than that. Dawson's Englishness gives us a clue to his scholarly temperament, and that temperament, in turn, helps us understand his strange neglect. Landscape meant much to him—the Yorkshire of his growing up, the Winchester and Oxford of his early manhood, the “wild moorland country” he returned to as a fledgling scholar and a family man. For years he was a private scholar and country squire working away from the company of others, seeking solace in the stark beauty of the fell. He could see in that wildness a world of myth and legend, a world “half history and half poetry,” a world fully alive. “No one,” he wrote, “could owe more to childhood impressions than I did. It was then I acquired my love of history, my interest in the differences of cultures and my sense of the importance of religion in human life, as a massive, objective, unquestioned power that entered into everything and impressed its mark on the external as well as the internal world.” Churches and tombs and crosses were his first books. Marks on a landscape marked him for life.

His life, in fact, was devoted to understanding those early apprehensions of a powerful and still living past. His books suggest the theme. *The Age of the Gods* appeared in 1928, *Progress*

and Religion in 1929, *The Making of Europe* in 1932, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement* in 1933, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* in 1950, *Understanding Europe* in 1952, *Medieval Essays* in 1954, *The Dynamics of World History* in 1957. In *Enquiries Into Religion and Culture*, published in 1933, he spelled it out:

The central conviction which has dominated my mind ever since I began to write is the conviction that the society or culture which has lost its spiritual roots is a dying culture, however prosperous it may appear externally. Consequently the problem of social survival is not only a political or economic one; it is above all things religious, since it is in religion that the ultimate spiritual roots both of society and the individual are to be found.

There you have it in a nutshell—what Dawson believed, and why, perhaps, he is so alien to the historical profession today. The mystery is not so mysterious after all. Religion is the question and, for

But plenty of historians take religion perfectly seriously as personal belief or as object of inquiry, devoting their lives to one or other or sometimes both. Why, then, is Dawson discarded by them? The point is that, to some historians, Dawson hardly seems an historian at all, but, instead, an odd mixture of philosopher, anthropologist, sociologist, and seer. His very versatility is a strike against him. By defying categories, he makes it easier for others to dismiss him as a dilettante. He was not that, but borrowing from many disciplines, he arrived at the truth by way of a vast range of scholarship. Nowadays, when “fields” get narrower and narrower—so that they begin to resemble miserable little tufts—there is not much room for renaissance men.

For some critics, though, even those who acknowledge his learning, the more serious charge against Dawson is that he was simply a propagandist. To the otherwise intelligent Norman Davies, Dawson's “Catholic thesis of history” (whatever that is) fails “to illuminate the pluralism of recent centuries.” One wonders if Davies has actually read him. To

TO SOME HISTORIANS, **DAWSON HARDLY SEEMS AN HISTORIAN AT ALL**, BUT, INSTEAD, AN ODD MIXTURE OF **PHILOSOPHER, ANTHROPOLOGIST, SOCIOLOGIST, AND SEER**.

Dawson, the answer. He believed in certain notions that many historians nowadays find hard to swallow—that there is a human nature; that there is a fixed self; that there are moral as well as material differences between cultures and civilizations; that every historical judgment is a form of moral judgment; that man is a profoundly spiritual being whose search for transcendence is more than the mere sacralizing of economic or social necessities. Such views are uncomfortably insistent, full of self-certainty. They also happen to be right.

the often foolish Hayden White, Dawson prefers the “sedatives” of religion to the certainties of science, an argument so silly as not to be taken seriously. And to other historians, echoing the charge of dilettantism, Dawson was not really an historian at all but a subtle kind of theologian who cloaked his theodicy in a smattering of history to give it pith. None of these criticisms has merit, and some are demonstrably absurd, yet they linger, faintly unpleasant, like last year's scent. Modernists despise Dawson for his anti-modernism, despite the fact that

he was, in certain ways, strikingly modern in his methods. Postmodernists deplore his authorial confidence, never pausing for a moment to listen to their own. Rationalists reject his religion, generally in the most irrational way imaginable.

And it is Dawson's religion, of course, that is at the back of it all—the proof of an intellect seriously compromised, the sign of a good man gone wrong. But there was nothing simple or naïve about Dawson's religiosity, nothing that smoothed away historical complexity, nothing that reduced the past to a simple plot with a happy ending. On the contrary, if you want to hear the multiple voices of the past, the sheer clamor of humanity, listen to man's quest for the divine. For Dawson, that quest was the one, overwhelming fact—the “massive, objective reality”—that gave history its meaning. The spiritual element came first. Everything else followed. Civilizations rose or fell because of it. The Marxists were simply wrong to give priority to economics:

The experience of Mohammed in the cave of Mount Hira, when he saw human life as transitory as the beat of a gnat's wing in comparison with the splendor and power of the Divine Unity, has shaped the existence of a great part of the human race ever since. For a people who has heard thrice a day for a thousand years the voice of the muezzin proclaiming the unity of God cannot live the same life or see with the same eyes as the Hindu who worships the life of nature in its countless forms and sees the external world as the manifestation of the interplay of cosmic sexual forces.

Go back even farther. The ultimate foundation of primitive religion was not belief in ghosts or mythical beings “but

an obscure and confused intuition of transcendent being—an ‘ocean of supernatural energy.’” Early man was not a noble savage because he was not a savage at all:

The ultimate aims which the hunter hoped to secure were no doubt predominantly practical—success in hunting and success in war—but the means employed were of a distinctly religious character—prayer and meditation, asceticism and withdrawal, humility and faith...

There was something more foundational than economics, something deeper than the struggle of the classes. That something was religion, the basis of all culture and ground of every civilization. The heart is restless until it rests in Thee.

Without falling into circularity, Dawson could see this religious instinct at work in multiple ways, many of them unexpected. Even the most indifferent among us, those who think themselves above such things, can succumb to it. That is why people who would never be caught in church will happily stand for an anthem or swear to obey the law or whisper in awe at a parchment or salute a commander in chief. Even Marxists march before their priests. Scientists worship Science. These efforts at transcendence, these attempts to ritualize the ordinary and make it extraordinary, are tributes paid by the secular world to the sacred. If you can't have true religion, you make do with a false one.

And there are, of course, plenty of false religions to go around. Dawson identified at least three—Democracy, Socialism, and Nationalism:

Democracy bases its appeal on the sacredness of the People—the consecration of Folk; socialism on the sacredness of Labour—the conse-

cration of work; and nationalism on the sacredness of the Fatherland—the consecration of place. These concepts still arouse a genuinely religious emotion, though the emotion has no basis in transcendent religious values or sanctions. It is a religious emotion divorced from religious belief...

Marxism, of course, was a fourth. “Behind the hard rational surface of Karl Marx's materialist interpretation of history ... there burns the flame of an apocalyptic vision.” The bearded prophet of the British Museum borrowed freely from ethical principles of a Christianity whose metaphysical principles he thoroughly despised. And then, completing the theft, he turned the Dictatorship of the Proletariat into the Second Coming. If you want an opiate, try reading *Das Kapital*.

Dawson was thus a superb historian of religious emotion and religious belief. He knew his Marx and his Mark. That is why we need to reread him. If nothing else, it might moderate our desire for modern messiahs. And those messiahs do not flourish only in Moscow or Beijing. They can crop up anywhere. Historians for Obama—and Obama for Obama—please note.

We need, though, to do more than reread Dawson. We might also acquire some of his moral sensibility. Dawson's critics were half-right. He did have a preference for the Middle Ages. He did think, along with Goethe, that Christianity is the mother tongue of Europe. He did regret many features of modernity—its vulgarity, its hubris, its individualism, its greed. He did think that the age of the masses was worse than the age of the Mass. He knew, above all, that everything we thought would make us happy has made us sad. “No one can look at the history of western civilization during the present century without feeling dismayed at the

spectacle of what modern man has done with his immense resources of new knowledge and new wealth and new power," he wrote in *Understanding Europe*. "Not only have we failed to realize the ideals of the nineteenth century, we are all more or less conscious of worse dangers to come—greater and more destructive wars, more ruthless forms of despotism, more drastic suppression of human rights." And, he concluded, "whatever may be the ultimate cause of this crisis, it is certain that it is a spiritual one, since it represents the failure of civilized man to control the forces he has created."

These were not the complaints of a crank or an elitist. To the contrary, they were grounded, as was all of Dawson's work, on a compelling vision of man as a material and spiritual being, a natural and supernatural creation, a citizen of this world and the next. His admiration for the great English poet William Langland makes the point:

For Langland, the other world is ever present in every human relationship, and every man's daily life is organically bound up with the life of the church. ... He realized more clearly than the poets and more intensely than the philosophers that religion was not a particular way of life but the way of all life, and that the divine love which is 'the leader of the Lord's folk of heaven' is also the law of the life upon earth...

This is not "scientific" history. This is not "objective" history. This is not, in a way, history at all. But it is a statement about the past, and the present, that happens to be true.

And so, in the end, Dawson does have a "Catholic thesis of history," a distinctive, even denominational, point of view. But it is not the thesis his critics think. He was not claiming, as a Catholic, to know more about the ways of God than

his critics. He was claiming to know less. What he did not understand about the past was more significant than what he did understand. At the heart of it, he said, was an "irreducible element of mystery." "All our destinies are interwoven," the theologian Hans Urs Von Balthasar wrote, echoing an idea from St. Augustine, "and until the last of us has lived, the significance of the first cannot be finally clear."

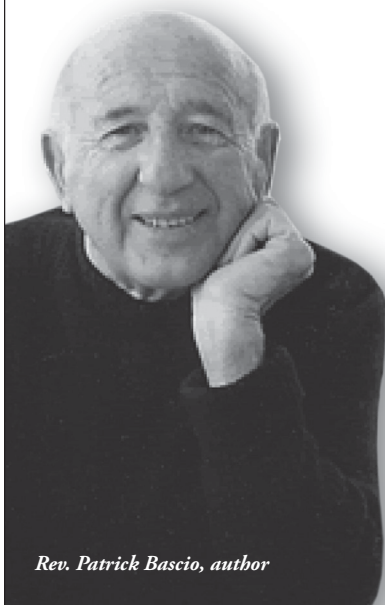
Dawson was such an Augustinian. He knew that in its deepest sense History is a meditation not about the meaning of the past but about the nature of Time. The historian without metaphysics is no historian at all. He is a person with only half a language—all words and no grammar, or all syntax and no sense. Eternity makes him feel uncomfortable. He

would rather deal with the causes of the First World War.

That is why Dawson needs to be rediscovered—and will probably not be. He makes too many demands. He tells us what we do not want to hear. He reminds historians, in every possible way, of their limitations as well as their strengths. But if we are serious we should give him a second look. When the McCulloughs and the Beschlosses have disappeared, Dawson will still be there, reminding us of the words of his contemporary, Father Bede Jarrett: "Life is eternal, and love is immortal, and death is only a horizon, and a horizon is nothing save the limitation of our sight." ■

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Unfettered immigration policy is harmful, dangerous, and wrong, says Fr. Patrick Bascio in his new book, *On the Immorality of Illegal Immigration: A Priest Poses An Alternative Christian View*



Rev. Patrick Bascio, author

"A rare immigration enforcement voice in the Catholic clergy"

— Brenda Walker, VDARE.com, 10/14/09

"Patrick Bascio, enriched by his theological formation and years of experience with the underprivileged, considers the ramifications of illegal immigration that we sometimes fail to see because our perspective is insufficiently broad."

— Rev. Dominique Peridans

On the Immorality of Illegal Immigration: A Priest Poses an Alternative Christian View by Fr. Patrick Bascio (AuthorHouse 2009), 215 pages.

Order at Amazon.com and AuthorHouse.com \$16.50 postpaid. Available as an ebook: \$4.95

New War Order

How Panama set the course for post-Cold War foreign policy

By Ted Galen Carpenter

FOR A FLEETING MOMENT 20 years ago, the United States had the chance to become a normal nation again. From World War II through the collapse of European communism in 1989, America had been in a state of perpetual war, hot or cold. But with the fall of the Berlin Wall, all of that could have changed. There were no more monsters to destroy, no Nazi war machine or global communist conspiracy. For the first time in half a century, the industrialized world was at peace.

Then in December 1989, America went to war again—this time not against Hitler or Moscow's proxies but with Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega. Tensions between George H.W. Bush's administration and Noriega's government had been mounting for some time and climaxed when a scuffle with Panamanian troops left an American military officer dead. On Dec. 20, U.S. forces moved to oust and arrest Noriega. Operation Just Cause, as the invasion was called, came less than a month after the Berlin Wall fell, and it set America on a renewed path of intervention. The prospect of reducing American military involvement in other nations' affairs slipped away, thanks to the precedent set in Panama.

How real was the opportunity to change American foreign policy at that point? Real enough to worry the political class. Wyoming Sen. Malcolm Wallop lamented in 1989 that there was growing pressure to cut the military budget and that Congress was being overwhelmed by a "1935-style isolationism." But the invasion of Panama signaled that Washington was not going to

pursue even a slightly more restrained foreign policy.

That the U.S. would topple the government of a neighbor to the south was hardly unprecedented, of course. The United States had invaded small Caribbean and Central American countries on numerous occasions throughout the 20th century. Indeed, before the onset of Franklin Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy in the 1930s, Washington routinely overthrew regimes it disliked.

During the Cold War, however, such operations always had a connection to the struggle to keep Soviet influence out of the Western Hemisphere. The CIA-orchestrated coup in Guatemala in 1954 and the military occupations of the Dominican Republic in 1965 and Grenada in 1983 all matched that description. Whatever other motives may have been involved, the Cold War provided the indispensable justification for intervention. And for all the rhetoric about democracy and human rights that U.S. presidents employed during the struggle against communism, there was no indication that Washington would later revert to the practice of coercing Latin American countries merely, in Woodrow Wilson's infamous words, to teach those societies "to elect good men." Thus the invasion of Panama seemed a noticeable departure. Odious though he may have been, Noriega was never a Soviet stooge.

The motives that President Bush cited for the Panama intervention foreshadowed the rationales for nation-building and so-called humanitarian missions that would recur frequently over the next two decades. Among other goals,

the president said, the invasion aimed to "defend democracy in Panama." He expressed hope "that the people of Panama will put this dark chapter of dictatorship behind them and move forward as citizens of a democratic Panama." Bush emphasized that "the Panamanian people want democracy, peace, and a chance for better life in dignity and freedom. The people of the United States seek only to support them in pursuit of these noble goals"—apparently with U.S. troops, if necessary.

Questions immediately arose in the media and elsewhere as to whether the Panama mission was an isolated example—or whether it was a template for a new American global strategy. *Time* correspondent George J. Church asked the question that was on many minds: "Does this suggest a new post-cold war foreign policy that casts the U.S. as a different kind of global policeman, acting to save democracy rather than to stop Soviet expansionism?" He noted that administration officials "affirm that Bush is showing a new willingness to use American military power to further U.S. interests that have little or nothing to do with communism."

The worrisome question was how those "U.S. interests" would be defined. An answer came less than a year later, in an area far removed from the Western Hemisphere, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. The Bush administration's initial reaction seemed surprisingly restrained. Secretary of State James Baker reportedly quipped to his cabinet colleagues that it "appeared that the sign on the [Middle East] gas station

just changed,” an attitude that conveyed little alarm about a possible threat to American interests. It was not clear that the president ever shared that complacency, however. He certainly didn’t after a bracing conversation with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who admonished him not to “go wobbly.”

The United States ultimately adopted a policy that was the antithesis of wobbly, sending more than half a million American troops to the Persian Gulf, at first to dissuade Saddam from expansionist designs he might have on Saudi Arabia, then finally to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait. But if President Bush at times justified this large-scale military venture in language that echoed his Panama rhetoric, there were at least some tangible U.S. interests at stake, notably keeping the main global source of oil production and reserves in friendly hands. That was not even remotely the case in the next, and last, military intervention of the elder Bush’s administration, where we saw the full flowering of the Panama precedent: the humanitarian mission in Somalia.

That mission, launched in December 1992, confirmed what Panama had suggested: that the ideology of democracy, human rights, and nation-building had become a motive for police action anywhere in the world. America had no stake in Somalia, vital or otherwise, and administration officials made little attempt to pretend that it did. The justifications for sending more than 20,000 troops halfway around the world were purely altruistic.

The narrow object of the U.S. military intervention in West Africa was to distribute food and medical supplies to relieve Somalis long caught up in a multisided civil war. But such small-scale humanitarian goals were never realistic, and perhaps not even sincere. U.S. forces soon became entangled in Somalia’s complex, chaotic politics. The

involvement of the United Nations, which Bush embraced, meant that the mission would inevitably have a wider, nation-building aspect. Any reluctance that the outgoing president might have had on that score was not shared by incoming Clinton officials. The new president’s spokeswoman Dee Dee Myers candidly stated, “We went in there with a clear vision of humanitarian relief and nation-building.”

To that was added a murky vision of regime change. Just as the Panama invasion centered on the person of Manuel Noriega, and Saddam Hussein personified evil during the Gulf War, Somali warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed became the focus of President Clinton’s—and the media’s—attention. Aideed proved more elusive than Noriega: a botched attempt to arrest him led to a running firefight in the capital of Mogadishu and left 18 Army Rangers dead.

The Clinton administration ultimately withdrew U.S. forces following that bloody incident, but the president and his advisers did not lose their enthusiasm for nation-building and regime change. Indeed, Somalia was just the beginning. The following year U.S. troops landed in Haiti to restore the elected president (and populist demagogue) Jean Bertrand Aristide to office. Later, U.S. air power was brought to bear against Bosnian Serbs to influence the civil war in Bosnia. That was followed by the dispatch of ground forces to implement the Dayton Accords.

This was the new norm—there may no longer have been a global menace to contend against, but dictators and warlords now had to be overthrown or hemmed in to ensure democracy and human rights. Virtually no one in the Clinton administration argued that Bosnia was essential to the security and well-being of the United States. Although Secretary of State Warren Christopher made a feeble attempt to justify interven-

tion on the basis of general American security concerns—much as canal security and the wider implications for the drug war had been invoked in the Panama invasion—even he did not seriously argue that a parochial conflict could trigger another world war. Instead, he asserted, “This is an important moment for our nation’s post-Cold War role in Europe and the world. It tests our commitment to the nurturing of democracy and the support of environments in which democracy can grow and take root.” The U.S. was now responsible for guaranteeing order everywhere, not only in our relative “backyard” of Latin America but from the Middle East to the Horn of Africa to the Balkans.

The United States had assumed an identity as leader and defender of the free world during the Cold War. After the fall of European communism, the whole world was “free”—or should have been, in the eyes of our foreign-policy elites. There was no systematic challenger to U.S. power, and the only thing standing in the way of universal prosperity and democracy was the occasional Third World strong man. The Cold War itself had never been about democracy or human rights—not really—but it became an incubator for this new ideology. After the Berlin Wall fell, the war against the Noriegas of the world could begin—and it provided a convenient pretext for maintaining U.S. military power at Cold War levels. There was a new world to order, after all.

Operation Just Cause was a catalyst for Washington’s new role not only as worldwide policeman, but as global armed social worker. There was a time two decades ago when empire could have been forsaken. But instead of coming home, we went to Panama City. ■

Ted Galen Carpenter is vice president for defense and foreign-policy studies at the Cato Institute.

The People's Priest

Ivan Illich understood the dangers of trying to save the world.

By Chase Madar

NEXT TIME YOU'RE INVITED to a '70s party and find your Travolta evening-wear shrunk, bring a book by Ivan Illich. Better yet, find a quiet corner and sit down and read it. No, not the late-Tolstoy novella about that guy who dies, but a book by Ivan double-"I" Illich, the maverick social critic whose fans and followers thundered across multiple continents throughout the late '60s and '70s. The radical priest (and later, radical ex-priest) hasn't been heard much since. Even before his death at age 76 in 2002, his work had fallen out of fashion. *New York Times* book reviewer Anatole Brody snarked in 1989 that in purging his overcrowded shelves, he deep-sixed Illich's oeuvres with especial vigor.

But the work of Ivan Illich deserves a happier afterlife, for he was a remarkably penetrating social critic, a secular heresiarch whose marrow-deep analyses of contemporary institutions—healthcare, education, transport, and economic development—remain pertinent. In the swinging "development decade" of the '70s, Illich captivated a global audience with his counterintuitive theses: institutionalized education is the enemy of learning; cars are immobilizing; modern medicine makes people sick; and the creeping medicalization of life is deeply unhealthy. Behind all of these book-length polemics was the insight that expenditure on various institutions and services becomes, after a certain point, not just counterproductive but toxic. Heady stuff, but readers hoping to find some totally wild rants in

his books are usually disappointed; Illich carefully supports his assertions with social-science literature from several languages.

Illich was a quasi-mythical being, and from the bare facts of his biography it's easy to see why. The child of a German-Jewish mother and a Croatian father, he grew up speaking German, Italian, and French, picked up Serbo-Croatian, studied Greek and Latin, and became fluent in Spanish and English. Young Illich survived the Axis's racial policies and after studies in Florence, Rome, and Salzburg earned graduate degrees in history, philosophy, and theology. He was ordained as a priest and seemed set to become the next young polyglot polymath at the Vatican.

Instead, in 1951, he signed up to become a parish priest in one of New York's poorest neighborhoods—Washington Heights, on the northern tip of Manhattan, then a barrio of fresh-off-the-airplane Puerto Rican immigrants. The classically educated bookworm turned out to be an effective and popular priest. The experience of tending to immigrant parishioners as they got flash-fried in urban modernity left a lasting impression of the grotesque inadequacy of large-scale, rationally administrated institutions in dealing with basic human needs.

Having mesmerized Cardinal Spellman, Illich was appointed to run a language school for priests in Puerto Rico, and for a man who would later condemn institutionalized education as oppres-

sive babysitting, he was by all accounts a skillful pedagogue. "The program was rigorous, six or seven hours a day of drills. And if a priest complained, he'd just tell him to pack his bags and leave," remembers Msgr. John Powis, a retired priest who has spent five decades in Brooklyn's working-class neighborhoods. "He'd tell us that if you don't want to learn the people's culture, you'll never learn their language, so don't even bother."

In 1956, the young priest was made vice rector of the Catholic University in Puerto Rico at age 30, a position he managed to keep for several years before getting thrown out—Illich was just a little too loud in his criticism of the Vatican's pronouncements on birth control and comparatively demure silence about the bomb.

But this was the age of Vatican II, and there were plenty of opportunities for a dynamic priest with lots of ideas and good connections. His next stop was Cuernavaca, Mexico, where he founded CIDOC, the Center for Intercultural Documentation. Throughout the late '60s and early '70s, CIDOC was part language school and part free university for intellectual hippies from all over the Americas. "Some people thought it was funded by big revolutionary money, others thought it was a CIA front," remembers Rabbi Everett Gendler, who spent a season at CIDOC in 1968-69. CIDOC was not loved by the local Opus Dei chapter, which accused Illich of all sorts of offenses, and in 1968, he was

summoned to Rome to account for himself. He quit the priesthood, but stayed in charge of CIDOC until he dissolved the institute in 1977.

In Cuernavaca, Illich was able to develop his potent and highly influential critique of Third World development schemes and their fresh-faced agents: Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, the Peace Corps, and countless other missionary efforts bankrolled and organized by wealthy nations, foundations, and religious groups. His 1968 address to the Conference on Interamerican Student Projects, a Catholic youth-service program, is worth quoting at sulfurous length:

I am here to tell you, if possible to convince you, and hopefully, to stop you, from pretentiously imposing yourselves on Mexicans. I do have deep faith in the enormous good will of the U.S. volunteer. However, his good faith can usually be explained only by an abysmal lack of intuitive delicacy. By definition, you cannot help being ultimately vacationing salesmen for the middle-class 'American Way of Life,' since that is really the only life you know. A group like this could not have developed unless a mood in the United States had supported it—the belief that any true American must share God's blessings with his poorer fellow men. The idea that every American has something to give, and at all times may, can and should give it, explains why it occurred to students that they could help Mexican peasants 'develop' by spending a few months in their villages ...

You, like the values you carry, are the products of an American society of achievers and consumers, with its two-party system, its uni-

versal schooling, and its family-car affluence. You are ultimately—consciously or unconsciously—'salesmen' for a delusive ballet in the ideas of democracy, equal opportunity and free enterprise among people who haven't the possibility of profiting from these.

Next to money and guns, the third largest North American export is the U.S. idealist, who turns up in every theater of the world: the teacher, the volunteer, the missionary, the community organizer, the economic developer, and the vacationing do-gooders. Ideally, these people define their role as service. Actually, they frequently wind up exacerbating the damage done by money and weapons, or 'seducing' the 'underdeveloped' to the benefits of the world of affluence and achievement.

Illich's polemics were not properly "nuanced," and his rosy view of the peasant *Gemeinschaft* was more than a little romantic. But the worldview he

Intellectuals the world over saw what was happening in Southeast Asia, remembered the imperialist platitudes of Europe, and began to discern in the peddlers of "development" some rather violent, neocolonial tendencies. (Strategic hamlets, anyone?) Their doubts found a forceful and erudite mouthpiece in Illich, whose critiques jolted many people awake.

The key concepts of Illich's thought on development and its discontents are found in one of his earliest books, *Tools for Conviviality* (1973). Elite professional groups, wrote Illich, have come to exert a "radical monopoly" on such basic human activities as health, agriculture, home-building, and learning, leading to a "war on subsistence" that robs peasant societies of their vital skills and know-how. The result of much economic development is very often not human flourishing but "modernized poverty," dependency, and an out-of-control system in which the humans become worn-down mechanical parts. With his writings, Illich tried to envision the "disestablishment" of systems of

ELITE PROFESSIONAL GROUPS, WROTE ILLICH, HAVE COME TO EXERT A "RADICAL MONOPOLY" ON SUCH BASIC HUMAN ACTIVITIES AS HEALTH, AGRICULTURE, HOME-BUILDING, AND LEARNING, LEADING TO A "WAR ON SUBSISTENCE."

railed against was far more delusional and had vast quantities of money and napalm backing it up. In the age of Robert McNamara and Walt Rostow, Third World economic development projects were frequently intermingled with brute force. (McNamara, after serving as Kennedy and Johnson's secretary of defense, became head of the World Bank; Rostow, a development economist and Johnson's national security adviser, regarded the Vietnam War as an aid project until the end of his days.)

education (*Deschooling Society*, 1971), transport (*Energy and Equity*, 1974), medicine (*Medical Nemesis*, 1975), and the very concept of humankind as a primarily economic being (*Shadow Work*, 1981). In all these studies, the horizon is utopian, but the analysis is always rooted in concrete experience. This is perhaps the lasting appeal of Illich's work: while colossally learned, it is subversively attuned to everyday needs.

A common, spluttering response to Illich's polemics was "Just what does he

propose we do instead?" Good question. Teasing policy implications out of Illich's thoroughgoing critiques is not a science, and it is possible to chart radically different paths out of the desolation that he mapped. (It is fitting that the only major politician influenced by Illich's thought is the chameleon-like Jerry Brown, still protean at 71.) Coming up with a positive policy alternative to, say, No Child Left Behind is one thing, but taking apart the whole modern education system down to its DNA does not lead to any clear-cut, bullet-point solutions. Even so, Illich's mischievous acts of creative destruction did spur a rethinking of fundamental methods, goals, and motivations. And for a time he was very popular, even trendy. His books were bestsellers, his lectures jammed auditoriums, his essays appeared in the *New York Review of Books* (back when it was radical, fun, and widely read) and even the square-john *Saturday Review*.

EVEN DEFROCKED, ILLICH MAINTAINED, TO THE BAFFLEMENT OF HIS MANY FREE-THINKING READERS, AN UNTROUBLED RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW.

Illich's celebrity faded by the late 1970s, when it was no longer so easy to be a left-wing critic of economic and social development and all its ambiguous blessings. In the heyday of Illich's screeds, the welfare state was still steadily expanding; we were (almost) all Keynesians then, and professionals reliant on government monies could easily afford to nip the hand that funded them with some radical visions. But oil shocks, stagflation, the Third World debt crisis, and the ebbing of the welfare state since its high-water mark left many professionals scrambling for survival, leaving few resources and even less will for institutional rethinking. In France, Illich had commanded a huge

following among the non-Communist Left, but the electoral victory of Mitterand and the Socialist-Communist bloc in 1981 lulled that nation's radical insurgency into a sleep from which it has still not fully woken up. All over the world, many Illichian critics of institutional power became institutionalized themselves.

Having shuttered CIDOC in 1977, Illich became a peripatetic professor, moving from non-radical, non-chic Penn State to the ugly modernist campus in the old Hanseatic free city of Bremen. He continued to publish provocative books, which earned enemies and allies on all sides. (Especially unpopular was his 1982 study *Gender*, which argued that the eradication of traditional gender roles in the sphere of labor had eroded women's prestige and power throughout the global south.) He wrote two fine studies of the 12th-century Renaissance, his favorite intellectual era. Even defrocked, Illich maintained, to the baf-

flement of his many free-thinking readers, an untroubled religious worldview. He continued to analyze society and politics with concepts and Latin terms taken from the patristic writings and the early Church, in whose gradual extension of pastoral powers over the faithful he saw the tainted origins of the modern administrative state.

Nudum Christum nudum sequere was a beloved Latin phrase—naked I follow the naked Christ—and he said it often in what he knew to be the last years of his life. He had noticed a growth on the side of his head 20 years before his death, but refused to have it excised as treatment risked some impairment of his brain function. Instead, he decided

to accept the growing tumor as a visible sign of his inevitable end, and when the tumor metastasized and the pain set in, he took to smoking raw opium, which he found a far more effective remedy than the pills his doctors gave him. Though most of the obituaries were patronizing, Illich died with an honor denied most writers: his books are still in print, thanks to the small but mighty Marion Boyars Press. (Many of his works have also been posted on the web—not surprisingly, Illich is very popular with the let's-put-everything-on-the-Internet-for-free crowd.)

Famous or forgotten, Ivan Illich remains relevant, for the Age of McNamara and Rostow is hardly over. Not long ago, Paul Wolfowitz was rewarded for his reckless, idealistic war-making with the leadership of the World Bank. If Illich opposed the '60s gold rush of rich-country reformers to Latin America, what would he make of today's militarized onslaught of reform and development? He would have had plenty to say about our benevolent conquest of Afghanistan, which many fervently believe to be a kind of Peace Corps/feminist/human-rights NGO empowerment zone, one that will soon just happen to have 110,000 soldiers in it—and that's not counting the mercenaries. The unaccountable power of aid groups in the sociopolitical fabric of Uganda, Bangladesh, and elsewhere would also have taxed Illich's rich gifts for diatribe. Back in the industrialized world, the professions of education, healthcare, and law are being ruthlessly integrated into the corporate-service sector in which the bottom line is frequently the only line. One highly doubts that Illich would applaud any of these events—but are there opportunities amid the wreckage? ■

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Serfing U.S.A.

Americans are conditioned to lick the hand that beats them.

By Reid Buckley

TAKE A SIMPLE PROPOSITION: anything government messes with gets messed up worse. This was the basic insight of Philadelphia, briefly revived by Ronald Reagan. Pollster Scott Rasmussen finds that by a 2-1 margin, American voters agree that no matter how bad things are, Congress can always make them worse. Go around the globe and ask whether anyone believes that government works. You will hear yes only from folk who stand to gain from the state—contractors, pensioners, bureaucrats, and officeholders.

Think Katrina. The terrifying winds, deluges drumming down unceasingly, the ocean bursting dikes to drown a city—these are not the images that spring to mind. These are the *sturm und drang* common to all big blows. They do not shout, “Katrina!” What springs to mind with that cry are those 11,000 trailer-homes sitting uselessly in a field in Arkansas while thousands of people in New Orleans went without shelter. The ruling evocative image is not the ferocity of the storm; it is the bumbling incompetence of government.

When will it dawn on our intelligentsia that the world is properly apprehended by poetry, not didacticism? Ask e.e. cummings, what is spring? Spring is mudluscious and puddlewonderful. Ask Bill Shakespeare, what’s love? His answer: Sonnet 29—“Haply I think on thee, and then my state,/ Like to the lark at break of day arising/ From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven’s gate.” It is the evocative image seizing upon and possessing the imagination that—out of the whirling billions of images our neurons are capable of receiving all at

once, dizzyingly, like exploding galaxies—sifts the welter for us and catches reality, if only by the toe. (Sufficient victory!) Those trailer-homes defined the lessons of Katrina: the stupidity and inefficacy of government.

Just four years after that hurricane, we were slammed by a financial crisis that diagnostically—all apart from Wall Street greed and obscene executive salaries—was caused by government: by that spittle-spraying Barney Frank egging Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac into promiscuously churning out mortgages to people who could not afford them. That’s the illuminating face of the collapse: Barney Frank manipulating the public purse for ideological ends.

The White House and its rubber-stamp Congress rammed through a “stimulus” package costing zillions of dollars, vastly expanding government spending on pet projects but doing little to resuscitate the credit-famished private sector. Franklin Roosevelt tried much the same remedies during the 1930s, and they failed; they only worsened the Depression. That this is an historically unassailable judgment does not matter to the lobotomized knights errant of our liberal-arts education. Recent experience does not matter either: Japan’s economy continued in the doldrums and the ruling party fell. But the boys in power here are smarter than the lessons of the past.

Never mind that we are committing fiscal lunacy, condemning the nation either to bankruptcy or ever stiffening taxation draining energy from the economy in mortal doses. If present demo-

graphic trends continue, an ever diminishing productive sector will be called upon to support an ever expanding geriatric ward. But don’t do the math. Zeal is important; adherence to doctrinaire authoritarian nostrums is what counts. Government spending, government meddling, expanded and ever more invasive government is the sovereign remedy for all ills, jock itch and herpes included.

Our deaf-and-dumb left-wing activists are being yanked along by the snout of their blind faith in government. That brought us the futile War on Drugs, a federally directed effort that not only has failed to reduce consumption of toxic substances at home but now promotes civil war in Mexico; brought us the Department of Energy that in all its multi-hundreds of millions of dollars of spending has yet to produce a kinetic flaring of the imagination or by as little as one dollar per barrel prevent OPEC from extorting the world economy; brought us the Department of Education, which since Jimmy Carter has achieved a 30 percent drop-out rate among high-schoolers and sent test scores lower than Latvia’s. Let’s for pity’s sake not get into the Army Corps of Engineers. Nor into the department of highways and byways and related asphalt screw-ups whose chief business seems to be naming stretches of interstate after otherwise nameless grubs in Congress. I won’t mention Amtrak. Nor the Post Office. Government bails out General Motors using billions of dollars it does not have, cans its president, bilks its bondholders, ends up assuming possession of the company in partnership

with the United Auto Workers, and now proposes to resurrect its fortunes by producing expensive little green dream machines that nobody wants to buy.

The logic is unassailable because it does not depend upon reason, which proceeds from wisdom, which is gained by reflection on past performance and intelligent deductions from the same. Our alchemists are innocent in their ignorance of the ills their social engineering can wreak. But not entirely. Bubbling under the surface is a malign serum—the *libido dominandi*, the lust to dominate. A free people must ever be alert to this devil. Power is intoxicating. I forbear from repeating Lord Acton's axiom: thank me. But power mobilizing the resources of an entire people through the monopoly of the state can be irresistibly seductive. Some people seem to be born with the surety that they know better. They are Lucy, and to them we are all Charlie Brown. Contempt for the dumb unwashed masses, though unspoken, is integral to their psychology.

Who are these elite? Why, those who think uncommonly well of themselves and of whom the rest of us are advised (by them) to think even better. Listen to the glabrous philosophers on "Washington Week" with their superior drawls and insufferable airs of being in the know. These are our schoolmarms: social engineers of all descriptions from wacko climatologists to homeopathic health addicts, Hollywood savants as prolific in their political wisdom as they are in their marital infidelities, and, of course, denizens of the Beltway who seek to justify their parasitism on the body politic and perpetuate it.

The new element in this mix is the messianism of Barack Obama, a deeply complex person who believes his sacred mission is to change this Republic irrevocably. As little as Mr. Obama is repelled by banana-republic despots, he is so addicted to centralized authority that he

apparently has no understanding of the principle of subsidiarity and falls into the hubris of thinking that, as Pope Benedict puts it in *Caritas in Veritate*, "political reasoning [is] omnipotent."

The old formula of the power-hungry was tax, spend, and elect. The improved formula is to stampede (a not unwilling) Congress into spending unimaginable sums—\$10 trillion is the latest estimate—and elect the right sort forever. There is no going back.

I overheard a snippet of conversation at lunch. There had been a wedding reception at our little club the night before that lasted from 9 PM until 6 AM. (These are Spaniards.) Four hundred guests, feeding and drinking nine hours straight.

One reveler confessed to another, "*Me emborraché anoche.*"¹

"*Como?*" asked his friend.²

"*Con paciencia.*"³

It's the impatience of the Obama regime that shows how besotted they are with power. There is a gnostic spirit in this revolution: transparent in the arrogance and urgency of Obama is a desire to raise up the City of Man into the City of God. The stimulus bill was pushed with apocalyptic fervor. No time to think, to consider, to debate, to reflect. Not even to read the 1,000+ pages. It had to be passed now or the country would fall into ruin. Three quarters of a trillion dollars! That single episode mocks the apologetics of democracy, whose structural safeguards of minority opinion are being steadily undercut. The "new federalism" preached at various times over the past two decades is the old power play by the Potomac, rendering lower levels of government impotent. Local will is an encumbrance.

The instances of pigheaded government bungling across the country are manifold. We now have 15 newly

appointed czars—a novel ruling caste in our society: unelected—presiding over major sectors of our struggling economy, only one of whom boasts any executive savvy at all. The background of Obama's high priests is entirely bureaucratic. But, as historian Michael Burleigh reminds us, past experience and the deductions to be drawn from it do not count in the mindset of the "laid-off leftwing messiahs" at the helm, who are all—the president chief among them—politicians and bureaucrats.

If our medical system does not cover everyone in the United States, why, throw government at that, too, spend another \$2 trillion the Treasury does not have, adopt the nationalized system that has been ruinous to the quality of medicine in Canada and England and Denmark and Sweden and everywhere else it has been tried, to the end that the sore afflicted in those countries who can afford to do so fly to the United States for treatment.

The implications of the Obama Revolution, which has come upon this Republic so suddenly, are scaring not only middle-class Americans but professional observers. In commenting on the Obama national healthcare plan, for example, urbane political analyst Mark Steyn writes, "More than any other factor, it dramatically advances the statist logic for remorseless encroachments on self-determination. It's incompatible with a republic of self-governing citizens. The state cannot guarantee against every adversity and, if it attempts to, it can do so only at an enormous cost to liberty." He concludes, "Big government becomes a kind of religion: the church as state." St. Augustine popped that bubble 1,700 years ago, but who among our graduates from colleges of the liberal arts reads him? This second decade of the 21st century may be tabbed by historians as La Deuxième République Américaine, because the Republic founded in Philadelphia will be henceforth unrecog-

¹ "I got drunk last night."

² "How?"

³ "With patience."

nizable. Our founding perception of what is desirable in the role of government and our governing institutions—restraint—will have been changed irreversibly.

In 1878, on the occasion of the opening of Johns Hopkins University, Thomas Henry Huxley gave a remarkable address. He predicted that by our second centennial our country would “be occupied by two hundred millions of English-speaking people ...” Respecting the numbers, he was close. He went on,

You and your descendants will have to ascertain whether this great mass will hold together under the forms of a republic, and the despotic reality of universal suffrage; whether states’ rights will hold out against centralized bureaucracy; and as population thickens in your great cities, and the pressure of want is felt, the gaunt spectre of pauperism will stalk you, and communism and socialism will claim to be heard.

Startling how much of this has happened to our country. Whether Barack Obama and his fellow believers kid themselves that they are only responding to economic distress and social crisis or knowingly, cynically scheme to establish bureaucratic control over every facet of existence in this country, radically restricting individual liberty, is beside the point. Whatever their motives—grant that they are well-meaning—they are, alas, playing the popular hand.

Herein the decisive political factor, which Mr. Huxley could not foresee: today’s American people want serfdom.

This our political commentators either have not caught up with or find too hot to voice. Whereas just three generations ago, during the Great Depression, it was accounted shameful to go on the dole, today’s American people, conditioned by the New Deal, the Fair Deal, and the

Great Society, swill with bovine contentedness from the slop bucket of government with never a twinge of conscience. Neither intellectually nor spiritually nor morally do the American people resemble the English-speaking and culturally English-centered populace that Huxley had in mind, nor do we resemble that now mystical generation that Tom Brokaw consecrated as “the greatest.”

We retain as a people a residual skepticism about what good, if any, government can do, but we have in the main become a mewling mass of spoiled adolescents, debauched in our personal and civic morals and stinking of materialism.

It is a fast-dwindling minority who can trace descent back to the Magna Carta. We were tall and lean, at least in our self-image; we are now squat and puffy, if not glutinously obese. We were Gary Cooper, now we are Jackie Gleason. In posters past, Uncle Sam was a tough, hard, Connecticut farmer, who barked “I WANT YOU!” and meant it. In posters future, he will be city-soft.

We were once free men who came of free stock, or from stock who longed to be free, who sacrificed and fought gladly for freedom. We are now descended in large numbers from people who never knew freedom, whose cultures have been immemorably autocratic. When this land was founded, we were artisans. We were peasants, farmers, freeholders. We built things, and we made things grow. We fed ourselves off our labor and off our own land. We now descend from the urban infestations of medieval cities past (in Europe) and present (in Asia and Latin America). Most of us now have never owned arable land, almost none of us have grown the crops or pastured the animals that feed us. In the mid-1960s, startling statistics were spun out claiming that half a million children in New York City had never seen a live chicken and did not know that milk came from cows.

The ancestors of today’s Americans

bear no resemblance to the British yeomen Huxley was basing his prognostications on; many of the ancestors of this new American people lived off the scraps of the rich, the nobles, the monarch, the Industrial Revolution. The ancestors of a critical and growing mass of present-day Americans existed in dungheaps of humanity amid rotting vegetables. Ponder the human squalor of India. Go visit the *poblaciones* of Chile. Their like are everywhere in Asia and South America, and that’s where increasing numbers of our people are coming from.

I am not for closing our borders to refugees from want. I am solely pointing out that we are not of the same stock as of yore, with a heritage of doctrines of personal freedom tracing back nearly 900 years, with the desire to stand tall on our own feet, not revert to the status of serf dependent on the lord. Boiling in our blood no longer is the fierce desire for liberty nor a native resentment of the state.

This is evident in the royalism implicit in the Camelot of the Kennedy era for which our media pine so ridiculously, and also in the Bush-Clinton-Bush-Clinton (almost) presidential succession of recent years. Liberty is difficult. We hanker for a king or a strong man or a ruling elite. We are an obsequious people now. It seems to elude us that a nation is great not because of its government but because of its people and that there is an inverse relationship in that maxim: the greater the government, the weaker the people. In just three-plus generations, we have become unrecognizable as the Americans addressed by Mr. Huxley.

I’ve been reading the recently republished *Letters From Russia* by Adolphe de Custine, an insignificant literary figure in the France of Louis Philippe until he visited St. Petersburg, Moscow, and other parts of Russia for four months and published his account, which became an instant success that ran through multiple editions. He describes the absolute des-

potism of a barbaric civilization, and from his comments we at last understand that the common thread running between the imperious czars of 19th-century Russia and Lenin, Stalin, and Brezhnev of the 20th century and now Vladimir Putin is the servile Russian character, which is so totally submissive to authority that there is a frightening absence of what we like to think of as soul.

The peasants of Russia at the time were serfs. They weren't emancipated until 1861 under Czar Alexander II, "the Liberator." They were of the land as though engendered by and born of its soil. They possessed no value, distinction, character, no identification other than as workers of that soil. When Russian princelings bought and sold land, they bought and sold what Nikolai Gogol entitled his novel—*Dead Souls*.

Upon hearing that they were going to be sold, peasants commonly, according to de Custine, sent a delegation to a landlord who was reputed to be benign. He might live at a distance from their part of the country; it didn't matter. The delegation would beseech this boyar to buy their land, that is, them. He likely protested that he did not dispose of the funds. The delegation of peasants came prepared for such a response. They offered this potential master the funds, from their own pockets, required for the purchase of the land, for the purchase of themselves.

Let's run that through once more: we have the peasants selling themselves into continued serfdom with their own money. One wonders why they didn't simply buy themselves free. Were they too servile in character and horizons to think of that? Had their imaginations been rendered unable to rise beyond hoe and spade? Not exactly. The authoritarian structure of Russian society did not permit impudence from peasants.

I am struck by how similar is the case between those dehumanized peasants

of 19th-century Russia and 21st-century American citizens. When we express our discontent in Tea Parties or at town halls, we are committing a social *faux pas* because we are being rebellious against the authority of our masters in the White House and Congress. We live under the sufferance and by the edict of Washington. We offer the government our hard-earned money to purchase our souls. (We say votes.) And when there is insufficient cash in the Treasury for whatever purpose, we offer our bondage as surety, paying interest on the debt or making good out of higher taxes, that is, out of our labor. We pay for our progressive subordination to the will of our rulers; we pay for our continuing enslavement, as did Russian serfs.

A definitive revolution is taking place as I write, here, in my stone cottage in Spain, gazing into the blue Cantabrian hills, ruminating, regretting, while you on the other side of the ocean sleep. Irreversible measures are being charted, draconian statutes are being passed, perpetual bureaucracies are being established, all dikes of restraint are being burst through and a flood of debt is being loosed that, like the waters of the Gulf that drowned the Big Easy, threatens to snuff out the lights of our city on its hill. ■

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Come All Ye Faithful

Benedict's Counter-Reformation

By William S. Lind

WHEN MY MOTHER was a young woman, in the 1930s, Cousin Lily, then in her 80s, gave her some sound advice: "Wherever you go, join the Episcopal Church and you will meet all the best people in town." "Best" in this instance referred not to the Book of Life but the Social Register. The staid, proper, elevated Episcopal Church, the Republican Party at prayer, was respectability's keep.

Starting sometime in the 1960s, God's frozen people melted, generating the mother of all theological mud puddles. From the abandonment of Thomas Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer to the introduction of priestesses in the 1970s and the ongoing election of homosexual bishops, the Episcopal Church forsook traditional Christian doctrine in favor of its own invented religion. Not

surprisingly, this apostasy fractured both the Episcopal Church and the larger Anglican Communion. The upshot has been a variety of continuing churches that maintain historic ties to Anglicanism, multiple movements within the Episcopal Church to restore orthodoxy, and the breaking away of many Anglican churches in the Third World, where most Anglicans now live.

On Oct. 20, Rome parachuted into this dogfight like a division of *Fallschirmjäger*. In a move that stunned the Archbishop of Canterbury, Anglicanism's titular leader, Pope Benedict XVI, opened the Roman Catholic Church's door to Anglicans as Anglicans. He invited them to move in—individuals, parishes, whole dioceses—while retaining their Anglican identity. They could keep their Book of

Common Prayer, their liturgies, their priests—even married ones.

Importantly, Anglican parishes affiliating with Rome would not come under the authority of local Roman Catholic bishops. In the U.S. and UK, most of those bishops are liberals. They dislike traditional Anglicans as much as they dislike traditional Roman Catholics and the Latin Mass. Given the chance, they would simply close down any Anglican parish that swam the Tiber, telling the congregation to go to Roman Catholic churches. This would leave most former Anglicans unchurched, as few could stomach the snakebelly-low post-Vatican II vernacular Roman Mass. To Anglicans, no sin is more grievous than bad taste.

Not to worry: Anglicans rallying to Rome will stay under their own bishops, or priests acting as bishops, known as “ordinaries.” Pope Benedict knows his American and British bishops all too well. His whole package is neatly wrapped up just in time for Christmas in an Apostolic Constitution, the most definitive form of papal legislation. The rough American equivalent would be a constitutional amendment. It’s not just a bon-bon.

How Anglicans will react to Rome’s offer has yet to be seen. Many details remain unclear. One problem is likely to be the doctrine of papal infallibility, a 19th-century Roman innovation. The Apostolic Constitution stipulates that Anglicans would have to accept “*The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church* as the authoritative expression of the Catholic faith professed by members of the ordinariate.” This could mean accepting papal infallibility as expressed in the catechism, and if Rome remains inflexible on that point, Pope Benedict’s initiative seems likely to fail.

But should it succeed, Rome’s offer has implications far beyond Anglicanism. Pope Benedict just might have taken the first step toward a second Counter-Reformation. The split within

Anglicanism between those who believe the Christian faith was revealed and is to be received and those who think you just make it up to accord with the temper of the times is duplicated within virtually every other denomination.

The root cause is the cultural Marxism of the Frankfurt School, commonly known as political correctness. Following Antonio Gramsci’s plan for a “long march through the institutions,” cultural Marxists have penetrated every mainline church. Their driving force is political ideology, not theology. They view the church as just one more venue for radical politics.

Their goal is Nietzsche’s “transvaluation of all values,” where the old sins become virtues and the old virtues, sins. In churches where they take power, the Holy Trinity is replaced by a trio of bogeymen: racism, sexism, and homophobia. Every denomination so afflicted is bitterly split between remaining Christians and the politically correct. (No, you can’t be both, as Marxists would agree.)

What is now happening, and what Rome may have discerned, is that the people on each side of this division find they have more in common with those in other denominations who share their basic faith, Christianity or cultural Marxism, than with the people on the other side of that divide within their own churches. A potential is emerging for a vast realignment, one transcending the divisions that came out of the Reformation. That realignment, in which the remaining Christians in every church would gather in a single, new (small “c”) catholic church, needs a leader. Who better than Rome? Indeed, who other than Rome could possibly pull it off?

Seen in that light, the Pope’s offer to the Anglicans takes on broader meaning. Some observers have seen a parallel with the arrangement a number of Eastern Catholic Churches have had with Rome since 1595. Those Churches rec-

ognize their own liturgical rites, systems of canon law, and procedures for ordination. Immediately after the announcement of the constitution—before the document was published—Father Dwight Longenecker, a former Anglican now Roman Catholic priest, wrote on the Inside Catholic website:

It has always been Benedict’s view that the way forward ecumenically is to replicate the existing structures that the Eastern Rite churches enjoy, and that this can be done with new flexibility and creativity.

He is willing to take risks to welcome those who follow the historic Christian faith, although separated from full communion with Rome. On the other hand, he sees those who prefer the modern gospel of relativism, sexual license, and a denial of the historic Christian faith that have taken over the mainstream Protestant churches. He knows there are plenty of them in the Catholic Church, and to them Benedict is quietly saying, “There’s the door.”

Yet what the Apostolic Constitution actually offers Anglicans is substantially less accommodating than Rome’s deal with the Eastern Rite churches. While Anglicans could keep their historic liturgical rite, Anglican churches affiliating with Rome would come under what are in effect non-geographical dioceses. That is a long way from the independence of the Eastern Rite Catholic Churches.

Here we come to the crux of the matter: is Rome’s offer final, or is it negotiable, an opening gambit? If it is final, it is not likely to draw many Anglicans and would have virtually no appeal to other Protestants. Papal infallibility alone might doom it, and as a vehicle for Christian unity, it would prove, well, fallible. But let us hopefully assume that the Apostolic Constitution is not Rome’s last offer, that something closer to the arrangement given to the Eastern Rite churches could

prove acceptable to Rome.

What then? It is possible to visualize not only Anglicans but all Protestants, in a new Counter-Reformation, leaving behind the cultural Marxists in the husks of their denominational institutions and joining in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. They could do so while remaining what they are—Lutherans and Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists, even some evangelicals—just as Greek Catholics remain in their Eastern rite. To Rome, they would give formal allegiance, recognizing the Pope as the titular and symbolic head of the Church. What both would gain would be a reunion of Christendom in the West in a church free of cultural Marxism—no small thing.

It is obvious that we are talking about a big leap for the Protestants. While few still speak openly of the “tyranny of the Bishop of Rome and all his detestable enormities,” that attitude has shaped their histories. Interestingly, however, one of the more enthusiastic responses to the constitution came from the Methodists. A senior official told the *Methodist Recorder* that “[the constitution] may open up ways in which Methodism, whose origins were as a movement in the Church rather than a separate denomination, may find its place in future, as a Church, alongside others within the universal Church.”

Protestants’ usual Sunday services would have to alter little, if at all, except for communion services, which are infrequent. Less obvious, perhaps, is the height of the wall the Roman Catholic Church would have to vault. That barrier is built largely of beliefs that, in the Ultramontane years of the 19th century, were turned into formal doctrines. Neither Anglicans nor Protestants are likely to swear to any of them, although they ought to be willing to accept them as what they were before the 1800s, long-standing traditions that were widely believed. (Papal infallibility

is an exception; it was an invention rammed through Vatican I in 1870.)

For Rome, there is a possible way around this wall rather than over it: *status quo ante*. Anglican and Protestant congregations and jurisdictions joining in full communion with Rome would not be required to accept as doctrine anything postdating their split from Rome. The Catholic Church would lead a second Counter-Reformation by backing away from some of the first.

Before the Council of Trent (1545-63), which begat the Counter-Reformation, Rome’s hand rested lightly on national churches. For example, we think of the Roman Catholic Church as having a single rite, after Trent the Tridentine Rite and following Vatican II the sad and dispiriting *Novus Ordo*. Before Trent, Rome allowed a vast variety of rites, as she would again. England alone had three major rites and a host of minor ones in a country of 4 million people. Rome saw no problem as long as the rites for communion services followed what Dom Gregory Dix called “the shape of the liturgy.” Anglicans might again chant in the litany, “From ghoulies and ghosties and long-legged beasties and things that go bump in the night, Good Lord deliver us.”

Pre-Trent, the same decentralization reigned in other matters as well. Kings generally had a good deal of say in who became a bishop. The Church might “volunteer” to pay some form of tax to a needy monarch. (After all, Church lands might make up a third of his kingdom.) When, occasionally, a Pope would overreach, king and bishops would come together to oppose him.

If Rome’s ambitions for a reunited Western Church go beyond Anglicans, and the Vatican is willing to bend beyond what the Apostolic Constitution currently offers, it may be time for Vatican III. The goal of such a council would be twofold: to sweep away obstacles to Christian unity stemming from the

Council of Trent and Vatican I and reverse the disastrous consequences of Vatican II, including the vandalization of the liturgy and abandonment of practices (such as fish on Friday) that buttressed Roman Catholic identity among laymen. Ultramontane doctrinal innovations would all have to be on the table; they might remain for Roman Catholics but would not be required of others seeking full communion with Rome.

Is all this just wishful thinking? The division between Christians and cultural Marxists in every denomination is certainly real: it screams from the religion page of every newspaper. With that division comes the potential for realignment and Christian reunion. Understanding the mind of the Curia is more difficult than penetrating North Korea, but Rome’s offer to the Anglicans suggests that Pope Benedict XVI is looking beyond the usual games. The ice has cracked, and a new spring may be coming.

Pope Benedict is a good German. Perhaps the question he could put to himself is this: who do I want to be, Kaiser Wilhelm II or Bismarck? Kaiser Wilhelm II was a bright and well-intentioned fellow. He was almost always right in what he wanted to do (including not going to war in 1914). But over and over he deferred to his advisers, who were almost always wrong. Bismarck, in contrast, knew exactly what he wanted—the reunification of Germany—and was both opportunistic and ruthless in making it happen. He brooked no opposition. As Kaiser Wilhelm I once said, “Sometimes it is a hard thing, being a Kaiser under Bismarck.”

Now there’s a vision to gladden the heart: a German Pope proclaiming the reunion of the Western Church in the hall of mirrors at Versailles. Be a Bismarck, Benedict, be a Bismarck. ■

William S. Lind is author, with Paul Weyrich, of The Next Conservatism.

Keep the Change

The zeal for improvement threatens old liberties.

By James A. Reed

THE PRESENT-DAY reformer supplants the ancient and foolish doctrine, "Everything that is, is right," with the still more foolish doctrine, "Everything that is, is wrong." In a world which an intelligent and patriotic ancestry lovingly handed over to us in a reasonably well-ordered condition, he runs amok. Our inherited liberties, guaranteed by a Constitution and code of laws, together forming a homogeneous system, are recklessly attacked until the whole structure is seriously imperiled.

The modern reformer insists upon substituting statutory commands for ethical precepts and official surveillance for the restraints of morality. He undertakes to force the acceptance of his peculiar doctrines by penalty of fine and imprisonment. The old and true concept of freedom embraced the right of the citizen to choose his own religion, think his own thoughts, indulge his own habits, and live his life without interference by the state, save that he should not trespass upon the rights of others. For this condition of personal freedom and responsibility, the reformer proposes to substitute legal regulations, which, like a web of steel, shall encompass the citizen from birth to death. Man will live and die the slave of the majority which enacts the laws.

Natural rights may be as effectively destroyed by the laws of a republic as by the decrees of a despot. The doctrine that the world can be made virtuous and happy by substituting for the natural right of choice, with responsibility, the prohibitions and regulations of law is as old as human tyranny. It has been resorted to in every age and has uniformly failed. It

established the Inquisition and equipped it with instruments of torture. It forbade freedom of thought, of speech, and of the press. It compelled men to embrace certain creeds upon pain of death, ordered people to attend particular churches or suffer barbaric penalties. It regulated the habits of the people in the minutest detail. And occasionally, as every school-boy knows, it burned a witch.

The modern intolerant differs from his ancient prototype only in degree. Alike they have resorted to the logic of brute force. In the past, the penalty was pillory and scaffold; today it is fine and imprisonment. Legal restrictions are to take the place of ethical instruction, parental precepts, and enlightened reasoning. The statutory reformer nominates himself as doctor-general of public morals and insists that all mankind shall swallow his physic.

Let it be admitted that this statutory moralist is generally honest and in earnest. Unfortunately, honesty of opinion and earnestness of purpose are only too frequently accompanied by gross ignorance. Zeal, honesty, and ignorance in combination always produce intolerance, and intolerance increases to fanaticism, eager to destroy all the natural liberties of men if thereby the zealot's ends may be gained. Regardless of the university degrees he has attained, the fanatic is invariably ignorant. Tolerance is the offspring of intelligence. The intelligent man knows he may be mistaken. The ignorant man is certain he is right. Give me the radius of a man's intelligence, and I will describe the circumference of his tolerance.

Regardless of divergent creeds and cults, modern reformers all agree:

1. That our plan of government has not worked with perfection and that therefore the plan ought to be destroyed;
2. That all who oppose them are "in league with hell and have made a covenant with death";
3. That they possess an infallible specific which every human being should be by law compelled to swallow, and that, thereupon, evil will disappear, sorrow will cease, men and women will be transformed into statutory angels, and "everything will be lovely and the goose hang high"—particularly if the reformer succeeds somehow or other in grabbing a lucrative job.

Accordingly, the agitation begins, proselyting proceeds, the morons are mustered. All the while numerous hired males and females, masquerading as disinterested representatives of morals, pull the strings and gather in the shekels. The political candidate, observing the gathering storm, promptly trims his little sail to catch the wind and scuds before it for the port of office. Commonly, he pledges himself in advance. Wherefore, he arrives in Washington hog-tied beyond squealing.

Of course, no plan of government ever has been or ever will be absolutely perfect; even if perfect, its administration would necessarily be faulty. Defective administration is inseparable from the frailty, dishonesty, and ignorance of human agents. What is needed is better execution of the law, not the destruction of the governmental plan. Clearly, the

new-hatched schemes must be enforced by men as inefficient or as corrupt as those embarrassing the present system. Accordingly, thoughtful and patriotic men agree that no principle of our government should be abandoned or changed, except for grave reasons, and then only when there is approximate certainty that the proposed substitute will not only remedy the evils that now exist, but will not bring worse and greater ones in its wake.

These considerations, however, do not appeal to the modern reformer. Like the patent-medicine quack he proclaims himself the master of human ills and drives straight on. All too often the public is convinced. More frequently, an active and organized minority is converted, and timorous congressmen, although unconvinced, hunt cover. Thus, half-baked schemes, commonly promoted by intolerants, mountebanks, and dreamers, are put upon the nation. And before the great, good-natured public is aware, it has been placed in leading strings, its rights circumscribed and its natural privileges abolished. More appalling is the fact that little by little, the great edifice erected by the toil and wisdom of the past is being defaced and its very foundations undermined.

The statutory reformer has a single and invariable method of procedure. He magnifies the wickedness and sufferings of mankind and attributes them all to the object of his special malediction. Witness the Prohibition propaganda. Its literature blazed with assertions that all vice, crime, poverty, and human agony were directly chargeable to the Rum Fiend. He was the devil incarnate who produced virginal incontinence, marital infelicity, theft, arson, rape, robbery and murder. He it was who filled the penitentiaries with pitiable creatures who otherwise would have stood resplendent as pillars of the state and ornaments of society.

The reformer cried aloud, "Amend the

Constitution, pass the Volstead statute and in the twinkling of an eye evil will vanish! Close the saloons and the jails will empty themselves; cries of poverty will be turned to songs of joy; childish wailings to melodious laughter; drunken blows to fond caresses; and hatred be transmuted into tenderest love. Highwaymen will give up their bludgeons and become ministers of justice and so on, ad infinitum, ad nauseam.

The legal revolution occurred, but the moral miracle did not come off according to schedule. Men still go philandering, and sometimes maidens listen to their amorous wooings. The fires were put out in the furnaces of the distilleries but were lighted under ten thousand illicit stills. Moonshining became a profitable trade, bootlegging a dignified profession, rum-running a romantic calling.

A vast multitude of men who formerly revered the law avidly conspire for its breach. The leprosy of hypocrisy has become epidemic. Half-drunken legislators enact dry laws and celebrate the achievement in moonshine. Police officers, sheriffs, constables, and bailiffs, their breaths reeking with rot-gut, drag to jail an occasional victim selected as a sacrifice to public clamor.

Meanwhile the Prohibition force revels in blackmail, subornation, venal immunities, treachery, fraud and crime promotion, revolting practices inseparable from the spy system. Tyrannous acts are of hourly occurrence. In violation of the Constitution, the homes, the business houses, baggage, vehicles, and persons of citizens are indiscriminately seized and searched.

Washington has become the universal Mecca of human freaks. Protagonists of vagaries gravitate by all known routes, some by election, some by appointment, and some by "divine command." The great majority, however, merely follow noses that itch for the business of others. There they bed and breed. They haunt

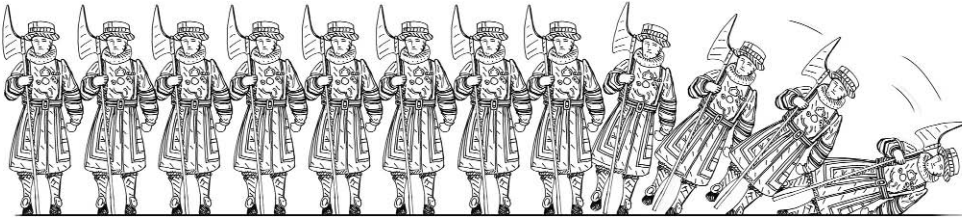
the corridors of the public buildings, crowd into the offices of congressmen, and insist upon displaying their fantastic and sometimes loathsome wares. Consumed by passion for experimentation, they regard the public corpus as a legitimate subject for ceaseless exploratory operations and clinical vivisection.

To this array of freaks, the Constitution is not a bulwark of liberty but a shackle upon progress which they hold in contemptuous disregard. Congress itself is full of men who do not think of the Constitution save as an obstacle to their desires. They study it only to devise some plan for its circumvention. There is no subterfuge they will not employ, no deceit to which they will not resort, if peradventure the limitations imposed by the Constitution may be cheated. The Capitol is choked with the advocates of change.

What shall the end be? Will that race of men who for a thousand years have asserted the "right of castle," rejected governmental interference in domestic affairs, proclaimed the right of free man to regulate his personal habits and to rear and govern his children in accordance with the law of conscience and of love, now become subject to a self-imposed statutory tyranny which from birth to death interferes in the smallest concerns of life?

I doubt not these statutory bonds will be eventually broken. The right of the free man to live his own life, limited only by the inhibition of non-infringement on the rights of others, will again be asserted. But before that day arrives, will the splendid symmetry of our governmental structure have been destroyed? ■

James Reed (1861-1944) served three terms as a Democratic senator from Missouri. This essay is adapted from a piece that originally appeared in H.L. Mencken's American Mercury in May 1925.



Outclassed

You may have been too occupied with the ongoing Tiger Woods scandal to notice, but here in Britain, class war was declared at the beginning of December. The

Sarajevo moment came when Gordon Brown accused David Cameron of dreaming up his inheritance policy “on the playing fields of Eton.” Cameron (Eton and Oxford) mobilized his forces for the coming struggle. If Brown wanted to fight a class war, he said, his chin wobbling slightly, bring it on. “It’s a petty, spiteful, stupid thing to do, but if that’s what they want to do, you know, go ahead.” Fer sure, fer sure. You know, like totally.

This is a phony war if ever there was one. Even if Labour was sending out dog whistles to the socially disadvantaged, the Tory policy of raising the inheritance tax threshold was not about class but about money. England is no longer a class act. There are probably not enough people of class left in this country to form a croquet league, let alone wage a class war. Some of the old class labels are still used, to be sure, and class resentment is not uncommon, but the hierarchical structures that class once proclaimed, and the deference it once inspired, have largely disappeared. It seems a bit of a pity, really.

When I was a boy, there were at least eight classes: the lower working class (or “undeserving poor”), the working class, the upper working class, the lower middle class, the middle middle class, the upper middle class, the upper class, and the aristocracy. There may even have been a lower upper class. By and large, the country was run by the upper middle classes, most of whom had been educated at public (i.e., private) school,

very often at Eton. Money was not then the measure of all things. Those of good birth were sometimes poor, and their needs were attended to by such charities as the Distressed Gentlemen’s Aid Association.

Even children were class-conscious in those days, sometimes keenly so. The first question I was asked at my public school was “Reid, are you U or non-U?” I later discovered that U stood for “upper class” and non-U for dead common and that the terms had recently (1954) been made popular by Nancy Mitford, who was about as U as it was possible to get.

In the Fifties, social standing depended not just on accent but on vocabulary. Here are some non-U words with their U equivalents in brackets: toilet (loo or lavatory), pardon? (what?), perfume (scent), dessert (pudding), glasses (spectacles). “Pleased to meet you” was non-U; “How do you do?” was U. “How do you do?” is not a question that should be answered. You don’t say, “I’m good, thanks. How ’bout you?” The proper response is, “How do you do?” You might think that such an exchange would inevitably end in the equivalent of a Japanese bowing competition, but it does not, at least if you are well-bred.

My mother, being a bit class conscious, would beat me senseless if ever I said “toilet.” And it wasn’t just my own dear mother or my generation. Thirty years later others had the same obsessions. In her 1981 book *Class*, celebrity writer Jilly Cooper confessed, “I once

heard my son regaling his friends: ‘Mummy says that ‘pardon’ is a much worse word than ‘f---.’”

Class barriers were weakened during World War II and began to tumble during the socialist Sixties, but it took a Conservative—Margaret Thatcher—to knock Britain into something closely resembling a meritocracy. Daughter of a provincial shopkeeper (lower middle class by Mitford standards), she was almost as wary of Tory toffs as she was of the undeserving poor. Under her, the Conservative Party became the party of aspiration and social mobility.

Such is the egalitarian mood now, such the inverse snobbery, that men seeking high office sometimes conceal their privileged backgrounds. In their potted biographies on the Conservative Party website, neither Cameron nor his policy review chief, Oliver Letwin—“Oliver is a passionate champion of progressive social reform”—admits to having been at Eton, though check out Liam Fox, shadow defense secretary, and in the first paragraph you will see that he went to his local comprehensive school (and doesn’t care who knows it).

What a dismal thought it is that Conservatives should have helped lay the yoke of egalitarianism on the British neck. I would suggest that the special relationship has not served us well here. “Elite” was a dirty word among the American conservatives with whom Mrs. Thatcher liked to do business, and it is now a dirty word here, too. What’s that about? If conservatives won’t defend the elites, who will? Once you get rid of your elites, you get Glenn Beck and Sarah Palin, and we get (maybe) a Prime Minister called Dave. A victory for conservatism? Get out of here. ■

Hometown Hero

Robert Nisbet's conservatism of community against the state

By Susan McWilliams

THE TOWN OF MARICOPA, in the southwestern corner of California's San Joaquin Valley, has one diner and one gas station. Its landscape is all oil wells and sagebrush, grit and heat and dust, just as it was a century ago when the sociologist Robert Nisbet, one of the 20th century's great conservative minds, grew up there.

It wasn't a pretty hometown, not the kind of place you'd ever see pictured on a postcard or memorialized in a Norman Rockwell painting. Nisbet would later write, in his elegant and restrained tone, that Maricopa's setting offered a "hostile challenge to the human spirit."

Even so, he remembered life there as happy. If the residents were daunted by their bleak surroundings, they didn't let on. In that unfriendly environment they thrived, largely by being friendly with one another. The Nisbets were part of an active small-community scene in Maricopa. His father had a regular poker game, his mother had her church friends, and Nisbet had devoted teachers and a well-stocked local library.

As a child, Nisbet felt the power of what would come to be a central focus of his work: the "intermediate society" that lies between the individual and the state and gives dignity and depth to both. Everywhere he went in his early years, Nisbet saw the influence of intermediate society: in the memories shared by his grandparents' neighbors in Macon, Georgia; in the clubs that defined his high-school years in Santa Cruz; and in the bohemian subculture among his classmates at Berkeley in the

early 1930s—the "Old Berkeley" he called it.

It was at Berkeley, under the tutelage of the iconoclastic Frederick J. Teggart and his department of social institutions, that Nisbet found a powerful defense of intermediate institutions in the conservative thought of 19th-century Europe. Nisbet saw in thinkers like Edmund Burke and Alexis de Tocqueville—then all but unknown in American scholarship—an argument on behalf of what he called "conservative pluralism." Against an ever-centralizing modern state, these thinkers saw small, partial, and local centers of authority as vital to human freedom and any genuine sense of community.

Nisbet's discovery of this European conservative tradition would supply the enduring focus of his intellectual life. First as a professor at Berkeley, then as an administrator at the University of California in Riverside, later as the occupant of Columbia University's prestigious Albert Schweitzer Chair, and finally as an American Enterprise Institute scholar—he made it his mission to articulate the ideas of thinkers like Burke and Tocqueville in America.

For Nisbet, conservatism is premised on protection of the social order—"family, neighborhood, local community, and region foremost"—from the politically centralizing and socially atomizing effects of the modern state. This involves more than a single-minded commitment to order or liberty—and it certainly doesn't mean privileging one of these goods at the expense of the other.

Nisbet criticized libertarians who think unfettered markets should lie at the center of conservative doctrine. "There has never been a time when a successful economic system has rested upon purely individualistic drives," he wrote. Yet he was more trenchant about those conservatives for whom order implied militarism. Military statism, he wrote, contributes to the "brutalization of cultural standards" and a disabling "bureaucracy and regimentation."

Order has to be built from the ground up, nurtured and reinforced within the structures of a local community. When centralized authorities try to impose it from a distance, the result is actually disorder: individuals become increasingly isolated, cut off from participation, and convinced of the meaninglessness of the political process. Liberty, too, is realized most fully in social groups. "The individual alone is powerless," he wrote. "Individual will and memory, apart from the reinforcement of associative tradition, are weak and ephemeral." Even what we tend to think of as individual greatness depends on a healthy social sphere: Nisbet emphasized that the figures we call "founders" and "geniuses" were not solitary creatures but social animals embedded in communities marked by shared memory.

The present-day United States, Nisbet warned, is like most modern states in that its intermediate society has become desperately weakened. The many ways in which Americans seek a sense of belonging—in the psychiatrist's office, in psychotropic drugs, in cults and "easy

religion”—testify to that enervation, as Nisbet detailed in his 1953 breakout book, *The Quest for Community*. The anxiety and estrangement felt by so many Americans are not due to technology or feminism or any of the usual suspects, he argued. Rather, they arise from the concentration of power in the modern political state, which has elevated national political relationships above all else, rendering the traditional primary relationships of family and neighborhood—which offer affection, friendship, recognition, and prestige to the individual—functionally irrelevant. As those relationships have shrunk, they have left a community-sized hole in the American heart. Individuals are so frantic for community, Nisbet feared, that they might give up freedom to get it. Thus America needs a “new *laissez faire*” that respects the dignity of autonomous groups, as opposed to the old *laissez faire* oriented toward autonomous individuals.

The Quest for Community touched a cultural nerve, proving popular not only with the emerging conservative movement but also, much to its author’s bemusement, with student radicals. Eventually, Nisbet realized that young leftists and conservatives shared a basic antipathy to doctrinaire liberalism. Both are suspicious of the liberal tendency toward atomized individualism, and both have been wary of the transfer of political power from the land to impersonal forms of capital. But radicals, especially after Marx, have concurred with liberals in a progressive view of modern history that imagines some ultimate human triumph is possible. In subsequent books, notably *Social Change and History* (1969) and *History of the Idea of Progress* (1980), Nisbet contrasted those perfectionist visions with a conservative sensibility tragic to its core. The conservative tradition sees modern history not as progressive but as

containing totalizing forces that will “in time desolate culture and personality.”

Modern liberalism and modern radicalism raise the specter of totalitarianism, a specter that haunts Nisbet’s work. Like most conservatives writing in the wake of Hitler’s Germany and during the Cold War, Nisbet worried about the rise of all-consuming states and believed that conservative thinking offered the surest guard against the totalitarian impulse. But he also faulted his fellow conservatives for their insistence that totalitarianism is irrational. Nothing could be more basic than the appeal of totalitarianism in the modern world, he argued: it begins by offering community to the individual, and community is what citizens of the modern state desire most. Thus totalitarianism was not just an external threat, for “when the small areas of association become sterile psychologically,” as they do under modern liberalism, “we find ourselves resorting to ever-increasing dosages of indoctrination from above, an indoctrination that often becomes totalitarian in significance.”

Nisbet feared that under these conditions a totalitarian spirit was seeping even into so-called conservative politics. He found it “most amusing” that “commerce-threatening, budget-expanding enthusiasts for great increases in military expenditures” had begun calling themselves conservatives during the Reagan era. For Nisbet, who thought that the military promotes a stifling bureaucratic mode of social organization, the Right’s love affair with the military was deeply worrisome. Such conservatism neglects the obvious fact that expanding the military is only putting “more government on our backs,” effectively expanding the powers of the centralized state at the inevitable expense of local communities.

He reserved his real fury, though, for those self-appointed guardians who

decry the “economic provider-state” but seek a “moral provider-state.” He was particularly frustrated by the growing evangelical movement within the Republican Party, a frustration he explained in *Prejudices* (1983) and *Conservatism: Dream and Reality* (1986). “From the traditional conservative’s point of view it is fatuous to use the family—as the evangelical crusaders regularly do—as the justification for their tireless crusades to ban abortion categorically, to bring the Department of Justice in on every Baby Doe, to mandate by constitution the imposition of ‘voluntary’ prayers in the public schools, and so on,” he wrote. Such laws actually assault the family by proscribing its legitimate authority, striking at the core of family rights. In the end, they are totalitarian in spirit, since “the surest sign of despotism in history is the state’s supersession of the family’s authority over its own.”

What these professed conservatives failed to inherit from the traditional Right, Nisbet argued, is its essentially pluralist spirit. Social differentiation, in its formal manifestation of federalism as well as in its informal practice, helps to diversify and make more concrete the social bonds that prefigure human flourishing. It also distributes the risks attendant to the imperfection of human nature across a broader plane, providing a kind of political insurance against mortal frailty. According to Nisbet, the Constitution as it was first composed in Philadelphia—with its careful separation of powers and underlying wariness about human nature—expresses a pluralist conservative sensibility. The Constitution’s safeguards stand in distinction to the contemporary trend toward liberal perfectionism. But the conservative pluralist founding has been buried by the subsequent triumph of the national state, which tempts even would-be conservatives away from

humility and toward hubris—away from the idea of limiting the state and toward the dream of capturing it.

Against what he saw as this dubious backdrop, Nisbet marshaled not only the tradition of conservative pluralism but also the tradition of sociological thinking. As expounded by thinkers like Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, Nisbet argued, sociology teaches the value of seeing human beings as men-in-society, not as lone creatures in conditions of rational abstraction. Sociology thus exposes the liberal social-contract tradition of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Rawls for what it is: an attempt at omnipotence based on disregard for the social sphere that can provide only a distorted picture of the human animal.

But that does not mean conservatives should abandon the liberal project altogether. Far from it. For Nisbet, the basic values of modern liberalism—the dignity of the individual, the moral sovereignty of the people, and the possibilities of reason—are noble and defensible values vital to Western civilization, worthy of conservatives' defense. Liberalism has only faltered to the extent that it has become unmoored from the social traditions in which it emerged. The great expounders of modern liberalism, like John Stuart Mill, were right to value what they valued—but they were wrong to imagine that a healthy form of individualism could blossom anywhere without reference to social organization. With that in mind, the task of conservatives is to reassert the importance of context—of vibrant and plural social organization—for the proper flourishing of liberal commitments.

"The symbols of liberalism, like the bells of the church, depend on prejudices and social tradition," Nisbet wrote. "In large part, the present crisis of liberal thought in the West comes, I believe, from the increasing loss of correspondence between the basic liberal

values and the prejudgments and social contexts upon which the historic success of liberalism has been predicated." Nisbet wanted to save liberalism from itself, and to do so he understood the necessity of saving things that seem illiberal: tradition, authority, hierarchy.

Nisbet hoped that a conservative argument transcending the dichotomies of liberty and order, liberalism and anti-liberalism, might come from the nation's universities. He saw the academy as the last modern institution to retain some of its medieval and therefore conservative flavor. But in his two major works on university life—*The Degradation of the Academic Dogma* (1971) and *Teachers and Scholars* (1992)—Nisbet prophesied that the conservative underpinnings of the academy would not remain for long. Institutions of higher education had been too far undermined by the frenzy for corporate and government research money, a craze that unloosed the academy from its customary, protective insularity and exposed it to all the disorientations of the modern state.

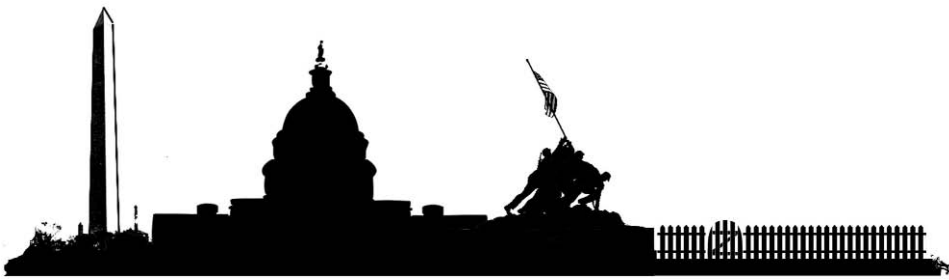
As goes the college, so goes the country. Nisbet did not think that traditional conservatism had much of a future in the United States. The "sheer mass of the liberal-provider state" was too substantial and appealing to its denizens. "Almost everything favors this kind of state, from war to ordinary day-in, day-out civil life, for people at all levels have interests and desires, and there is no surer way of gratifying these than through the provider-state," he wrote. "Current efforts to reduce this state are like nothing so much as chipmunks trying to bring down a giant Redwood."

Still, he thought, some trace of traditional conservatism would survive, as it had since Burke, as a counterpoint to the dominant melodies of modernity. If pluralism was not likely to become ascendant as a practical doctrine, conservatives could still work to temper the

totalizing impulses of the age. In the last years of his life, he told audiences that the contemporary Right has two viable goals: to expose the idea of "national community" as fraudulent, a first step toward shrinking "the centralized, omniscient, and unitary state"; and to work at "protecting, reinforcing, and nurturing where necessary the varied groups and associations which form the true building blocks of the social order."

Nisbet's renown in conservative circles has waned somewhat since he died in 1993; in the '50s and '60s his name had been as familiar as that of his friend and admirer Russell Kirk. Yet the problems to which Nisbet directed his energies have only become more apparent since his death. His reflections on the dangers represented by the American appetite for "pseudo-intimacy," for instance, have an immediate resonance in the era of Facebook and Twitter. His cautions about the totalizing forces of modernity take on new urgency in an era when serious people believe that global governance is a practical possibility. On the other hand, his pluralist understanding of the conservative tradition sits uncomfortably with evangelicalism, militarism, and libertarianism—the three world-views that dominate what passes for the American Right. Nisbet's voice is missing in today's politics because conservative pluralism seems to be missing, despite its formative role in the nation's history. But then, as Nisbet might remind us, remembering Maricopa, even when the national atmosphere is hostile, the true local community, the intermediate society, still offers the promise of a happier home. ■

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Strike a Pose

The District is a springtime town, all cherry blossoms, azaleas, and tulip trees. But Georgetown comes into its own in the season of remembrance and newborn chill.

The trees blaze almost like New England; the depopulated streets, which in summer make the place seem like one of T.S. Eliot's unreal cities, become poignant.

And then you get to M Street or Wisconsin Avenue, the boulevards of *Murder Must Advertise's* "city of dreadful day." The display windows hawk haute brands or punk bands, but the basic approach is always the same: turn your longings into accessories.

When I was in high school, my best friend and I thought that we were better than Georgetown; that was one of the many services the neighborhood provided. We were like every student, building papier-mache masks in which every polished statement or "spontaneous" purchase was another wet strip of newspaper laid down to create our faces. If we cheated the Metrobus by using a quarter instead of a bus token, it meant that we were Artful Dodgers. (I always got caught—and if everyone around me were as savvy as the bus drivers, I'd be a better person today.) If we drank peach Nehi at Georgetown Bagelry instead of Coke at McDonald's, it meant that we were unique. I don't regret thumbing through the vinyl at Orpheus Records looking for The Raincoats, even though I liked them half for their music and half for what it said about me that I liked their music.

It's appropriate that this consumer paradise is also the home of one of Washington's best-known universities. Undergraduates are the most sincere

shoppers the world has ever known. And it might be especially apt that Georgetown University is a Catholic school. Out of all the Christian churches now available to those who can't help but believe, the Catholic Church offers the most "display windows": the most varied faces on which to model our masks. Even those of us who attempt a bohemian traditionalism are obviously struggling to project an intriguing self-image. Yet one might argue that the more affected the faith, the more humble because nothing is more humiliating than being called on one's pretensions.

But I admit that my moral theology, on a marinated Saturday night in Georgetown, tends more toward Savonarola than I'd like. The lights are loud and the noise is blinding. The streets are jammed with American children who have outgrown their sell-by date, and I'm reminded that the only fact I ever knew anyone to learn at Georgetown University is how to snort powdered heroin off the cap of a ballpoint pen.

And yet—my own mask peels and I remember that teenage feeling that nothing was as important as knowing names and holding opinions about those names. I remember thinking that Rachmaninoff was a vodka. I remember high school phys-ed, where we had to run up and down the "exorcist stairs," which may be my second-most humiliating phys-ed memory. (The worst is the Presidential Fitness Testing in which I

walked the mile run while reading a library copy of Keats's *Endymion*. It's impossible for me to navigate the strata of pride and shame in that sentence.) I remember wishing I had that talent to always pick the right record, never praise the wrong magazine. It felt great to know the difference between the stores where we were better because we couldn't afford anything (Commander Salamander... oh, how I wanted those couture tutus in Bubble Yum colors!) and the stores where we were better because we could mock them while still giving them our lunch money (Smash, your source for middle-class punk).

It's easy for both the Left and Right to draw a distinction between authentic self-expression and consumerist self-purchasing. Rod Dreher's identification of a "crunchy con" movement got caught in this trap; he sounds like an adman whose pitch line is, "Buy our product because you hate consumerism!" In response, libertarian types argue that all self-images are consumer products, all dissent is commodified, so why worry? My memories of Georgetown suggest that we're more complicated than that. We can't choose our communities the way we choose our commodities, not if we want them to reshape us. I'd suggest that if our self-understanding never humiliates us, never forces us beyond both personal choice and admired community, we will never come face-to-face with our worst selves—our masks. ■

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Arts & Letters

BOOKS

[*Going Rogue: An American Life*, Sarah Palin, HarperCollins, 432 pages]

Rogue Warrior

By Jeff Taylor

I WANT TO LIKE SARAH PALIN. But to borrow a title from Hitchcock, I feel like *The Man Who Knew Too Much*—about *The Woman Who Knew Too Little*. Don't get me wrong. I don't care that Palin is not a policy wonk. In some ways, that's a plus.

It is her strengths that concern me. For example, is Palin's populism real or imagined? Or perhaps real but compromised? And, as the mother of a son on active duty, why is she so enthusiastic about unwinnable wars? Where is that famous common sense when it comes to minding our own business?

If I were the only one with such doubts, she would be in a much more formidable position to win the presidency in 2012. The obstacles would still be great, of course, and elite opposition would rise in proportion to her actual populism, but her base would be much wider.

Palin's very presence on the national stage elicits a visceral reaction. Love her or hate her. Why such emotional polarization? All of the criticism and praise revolves around populism, the ideology that places democracy at the forefront of political values. It is her weakness and strength. Whatever else you say about her, she is in many ways a quintessential American. She is not the only legitimate type, and her story is not the only American story, but the roots do go deep.

Liberals and Democrats have a host of articulated complaints about Palin. She's dumb. She's out of her league. She's divi-

sive. She's got a wacko religion. She's dishonest. She's a quitter. She's an animal killer. She's just a pretty face. Conservatives respond that the ranting of liberals is just a petty farce, but some of the criticisms are worth considering for what they say about both Sarah Palin and modern American liberalism.

The most damaging accusation is that Palin is ignorant. Liberals, and some conservatives, tell us that she is short on knowledge, if not intelligence. Exhibit A is the infamous Katie Couric interview. Palin's new book, *Going Rogue*, does not provide a convincing explanation of the debacle. Palin lovers have blamed bias: The Liberal Media. There's some truth to this. It's doubtful Couric cast a vote for the McCain-Palin ticket. But she was mostly pitching softballs. When asked, "What magazines and newspapers do you read?" the best Palin could do was, "All of them." The fact that Sarah Barracuda could not hold her own against Katie the Perky was a serious defeat for Palin.

Still, we cannot assume the woman is stupid. An idiot would not be twice elected to her hometown city council, twice more as mayor, and then chosen to be president of the state conference of mayors. She was elected governor of Alaska, defeating the incumbent in the primary and a former governor in the general election. She made history as the state's youngest and first female chief executive. A Bush or Kennedy might be able to gain such positions with little brains or gravitas, but not a Palin.

Perhaps she was suitable for the town of Wasilla or state of Alaska, but many are skeptical of her abilities on a bigger stage. Maybe she's too common. After Palin was tapped to be the veep candidate, *Newsweek* ran a cover story entitled "She's One of the Folks (And that's the problem)." But what did she expect? Katie Couric, Evan Thomas, Walter Isaacson, Tom Friedman, and other respected journalists are not voices of the Left.

Mainstream media writers and executives are mouthpieces for a decidedly centrist Power Elite. This is a loose-knit conglomeration of movers and shakers that used to be known as the Eastern Establishment. Today, it is bicoastal, with outposts in the metropolitan centers in between. Its members often disagree with one another about means but usually agree about ends. There is an elitist consensus in favor of wealth and power.

Sarah Palin does not fit into this consensus. Her biography seems so pedestrian before she became a sideshow freak during the presidential campaign. By her own account, she had a typical middle-class upbringing: "The Brady Bunch," 4-H, Girl Scouts, basketball jock. She attended four colleges, half of which were community colleges (*Can you imagine?!),* and her terminal degree—a mere bachelor's—was from the University of Idaho. Yes, Potato U. All of these social *faux pas* led to her embarrassing boast—on national television of all places!—of being a hockey mom. But the lack of prep schools, the absence of a Harvard degree, the paucity of vacations in France and Italy are what endear Sarah Palin to a portion of the 99 percent of Americans who share her background.

Many Republicans fear Palin's presidential candidacy because they are convinced she is unelectable in 2012. They may be right, but electability can be elusive. In 1976, 1992, 1996, and 2008, pragmatic GOP leaders nominated tired old hacks as a way of rewarding Washington insiders for years of compromise. They all lost. Whatever else Palin may be, she is not a Washington insider. Governor Reagan would have beat Carter in 1976 while President Ford lost.

The most serious criticism comes from conservatives in the Taft-Buchanan-Ron Paul tradition. Possessing a sense of history and a respect for the Constitution, they advocate the traditional foreign policy of neutrality—"peace, commerce,

and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none," as Jefferson put it. It was the default foreign policy of the U.S. until it was set aside by avaricious Republicans in the 1890s and covered with a gloss of idealism by Democrats throughout the 20th century.

Even the more belligerent new nationalism of Goldwater, which in the 1960s largely supplanted the old nationalism of Taft within the mainstream conservative movement, was based on defense of our nation, not on attempting to control the entire planet as a favor to foreign governments or for the sake of reputed ideals. This utopian and resentment-provoking policy is actually a variant of internationalism. Neoconservatism, an ideology neither new nor conservative, is a product of Wilsonian Democrats with a dash of Trotskyite Communism. The neocon founders were with FDR and Truman against Taft in the '40s and with LBJ against Goldwater in the '60s. Neoconservatives have always been deeply and unalterably committed to two of the most deadly -isms of all: militarism and imperialism. This is the foreign policy that Sarah Palin has chosen to adopt. As a result, her pro-life ethic excludes humans involved in any war sanctioned by the federal government.

There is a difference between being simple-minded and being simplistic. Simplistic thinkers need not be stupid. Sarah Palin is not stupid, but she is simplistic. She probably imagines this flaw to be a virtue. Maybe she's an individual of action, a choleric, who acts with self-confidence to get things done. Such volition has little perceived need for intellectual reflection because it already knows it's right and it needs to go straight to the action. Maybe she's confusing the childlike faith encouraged by Christ with simplistic thought.

Ironically, simplism of this sort produces a very unchildlike result: uninquisitive rather than curious, close-minded rather than absorbent, arrogant rather than humble. It's unfortunate, especially when applied to foreign policy. From her correct and populist intuition that loyalty and patriotism are

good, she moves dogmatically to an embrace of propaganda and jingoism. She does not realize that most wars are imperial and aggressive in nature, hence the opposite of the national defense she cherishes. Neoconservatives exploit this confusion, in Palin and millions of other well-meaning Americans.

Does ambition or ignorance, coupled with simplistic thinking, explain Palin's willingness to ally herself with neoconservatives? Possibly, but do not discount the influence of theology. Palin was raised in a type of evangelical Protestantism that sees Jesus as the Prince of War more than the Prince of Peace. Instead of pursuing spiritual warfare, as the apostle Paul urged, these Christians endorse worldly weapons against flesh and blood. This approach sanctifies secular policies no matter how far removed from the spirit of Christ.

Despite all of the criticism, Sarah Palin receives her share of praise as well. For many admirers, she reaches near mythic proportions of folklore. A cross between Queen Esther and Annie Oakley. Religious but gun-wielding. Pretty but spunky. Sarah's "You betcha" colloquialisms and "Fargo" accent provide a touch of the exotic yet are also rooted in the American tradition. Even the unusual names of the Palin children add to the aura. In her book, she explains the meaning of the name given to her daughter Piper Indi Grace Palin. She was named after Todd's airplane, independence, and the gift of God's unmerited favor. So you have a combination of the personal, the libertarian, and the spiritual. It's the whole package for many conservatives.

Palin's biggest political asset is her populism, which is why the choice initially buoyed Paul-style Republicans. She was a reputed Pat Buchanan supporter in the 1990s. Buchanan himself went on television and claimed Sarah as one of his own, "a rebel reformer." The McCain camp immediately threw cold water on that notion. Oh no, Palin was never a Buchanan radical! She may have been photographed in July 1999 wearing a Buchanan button, but that was only as a

courtesy to welcome a visiting candidate.

He had won the Alaska presidential caucuses in 1996, and in some ways, Palin has followed in his footsteps. The frontier character has given her political opportunities that would not have been possible in more stratified and established states. Not only is Alaska less settled and more independent than most states, but it is friendly territory for Christian populists. Leading Republicans and Democrats in the state had been in the pocket of Big Oil for years. Palin upset the apple cart. As governor, she took on ExxonMobil and the other two giant oil companies. With the help of reform Democrats, Palin was successful in enacting legislation that curbed the power and exploitative position of crony capitalism.

Thomas Jefferson, one of the fathers of American populism, included himself among the party of "Those who identify themselves with the people, have confidence in them" and who believe that "the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail," whose maxim is "Equal rights to all, special privileges for none." Is Palin faithful to the Jefferson tradition? At first glance, she seems like a feminine equivalent of Andrew Jackson—a backwoods rabble-rouser of humble origins who takes on the special interests with plain speakin'. Or William Jennings Bryan, whose mantle Matthew Continetti suggests Palin ought to retrieve, refashioning the Great Commoner's message into "You shall not crucify mankind upon the cross of Goldman Sachs." Frank Rich of the *New York Times* frets, "If Obama can't tamp down that rage across the political map, Palin will at the very least pave the way for a demagogue with less baggage to pick up her torch." For me, that's all to the good.

But here's where we get back to Hitchcock. Like many conservatives, I want to like Sarah Palin, but I don't want to live in a fool's paradise. As Machiavelli observed, most people "judge more by sight than by touch," which is exactly why they are easy to manipulate. Continetti writes for the *The Weekly Standard*, a publication just as elitist as the *Wall Street Journal* and one that was

owned by the same man until recently. If Sarah Palin gains national power, for whom will she be working? The many or the few? The voters or the pundits? How will she fill her campaign treasury? Like Ron Paul or John McCain? Is her populism one of style or substance?

A folksy demeanor does not make one a populist. Bill Clinton and George W. Bush are folksy. Neither is a populist. Lyndon Johnson was down-to-earth to the point of being crude. It did not stop him from being a willing servant of Wall Street. Richard Nixon's middle-class resentment of the wealthy was a chip on his shoulder, yet as president he surrounded himself with Rockefeller Republicans and Ivy League graduates. This leads us to Henry Kissinger. One of the pictures in Palin's book is captioned, "Dad and Mom with Henry Kissinger at the 2008 GOP convention in the Twin Cities. It was an honor for me to meet with Mr. Kissinger a few times, and even after the campaign to return back East for another visit with him."

Why an honor? Anyone with a sense of conservative history understands who Kissinger is. A liberal Republican. Nelson Rockefeller's right-hand man and chief foreign policy adviser. Harvard egghead exponent of internationalism. Architect of détente and snubber of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Detested by and a destestor of Sen. Jesse Helms and Gov. Ronald Reagan. In search of wisdom, morality, or conservative values, Palin would have been better off had she returned to Minneapolis to visit with a housewife or to Ohio for a reunion with Joe the Plumber. Novices are more easily flattered and seduced by the famous, professional, wealthy, and powerful. This does not bode well for the purity and consistency of a Palin administration.

As Rod Dreher notes in his review of *Going Rogue*, "Palin positions herself as a populist, but her populism is entirely cultural. She never misses an opportunity to tell us how weepy she gets when she thinks about our country and its military. She fires the governor's mansion chef, who is bored because her kids won't eat his fancy pants food. ... A little of that goes

a long way, and I wouldn't begrudge Palin a bit of it if her populism had any economic substance. ... Sarah Palin is selling a personality, not a platform." Palin's efforts against oil companies notwithstanding, she does not have a clear understanding of how her endorsement of conservative think tanks, conservative media, free trade, globalized military, and imperial interventions harm the real American families to which she is sincerely attached.

And yet. Sarah Palin has so many of the right enemies. The snarky comments that her every move engenders. The snobbishness of the elite media. Should we begrudge the fact that she has sought solace in the arms of some neoconservatives? Should we wish additional enemies on her? At least David Brooks calls her "a joke" and "a fatal cancer to the Republican Party." Doesn't that count for something, perhaps offsetting Bill Kristol's affection?

A few months back, blogger Lila Rajiva—not a fan of Palin—examined *Vanity Fair's* hit piece. Rajiva closes well: "The real reason why it's just fine to trash Sarah Palin is because she's a lower middle-class white Christian from a small town. So here's what I want to know. What sort of liberalism and what kind of democracy despise the race, religion, and culture of the majority of the people in a country?" Of course, the snobby ideology of most self-proclaimed "liberals" and "progressives" is elitism. Obviously democracy—rule by the people—cannot come from such elitism. Can it come from Sarah Palin?

It is not enough to be a "sincere Christian." George W. Bush was acclaimed as such and he was an awful president. Traditional conservatives have reason to wonder who would staff a Palin presidency. A group of godless warmongers and greedy pragmatists? Pseudoconservatives and globocop-aspirants like Rove and Cheney, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz—individuals not even having the virtue of competence? Would a Palin administration be a third term for Bush, as we're currently experiencing the de facto Clinton third term? That's a prospect that would yield neither lim-

ited government nor traditional values.

Pulling your punches when you're the running mate of John McCain is one thing. When you're at someone else's party, it's rude to insult the host. But Palin is now an independent operator. Theoretically, she's her own woman and can do as she pleases. The day of reckoning has come for the eight years of recklessness, for the lies told, lives lost, and liberty shackled. It's both politically foolish and conservatively apostate to stick to the party line of "All Hail Bush II."

It is unlikely that Palin will turn against military interventionism. The die seems to be cast. And yet, in recent months, George Will and Pat Robertson have publicly condemned escalation of the Afghan war and urged withdrawal of troops, so we shouldn't rule it out as a possibility.

If Palin were able to combine her moral and populist appeal with a more consistent stand for liberty, including skepticism toward war, she could keep most of her base and tap into the Ron Paul coalition. There is so much potential, but she would have to be willing to go even more rogue, to leave behind the national Republican establishment as she did at the state level on her way to power in Alaska. To be a truly conservative statesman (or stateswoman), you don't need to be wonkish, but do you have to be sophisticated enough to separate the wheat from the chaff, the real from the phony.

The contradiction of populism is that the sincere champion of the common people must be better informed, more astute, and more steadfast than the people themselves in order to serve them effectively. Identification with the people must coexist with discernment about the world of power and wealth. Or, as the Galilean said long ago to His disciples, "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." Spiritually and politically savvy yet true in intention and pure in action. That is a high calling, and it remains to be seen if Sarah Palin has what it takes. ■

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[*Faith-Based War: From 9/11 to Catastrophic Success in Iraq*, T. Walter Herbert, *Equinox*, 224 pages]

Goodwill Hunting

By Richard Gamble

BARACK OBAMA'S downplaying of American exceptionalism early in his presidency unleashed the wrath of right-wing bloggers everywhere. More than a few accused him of nothing less than betraying America's identity as the "city on a hill."

But it seems unlikely that these critics' sudden references to the shining city in the past tense will in hindsight mark the beginning of a fundamental shift in America's self-consciousness. Something more powerful than Obama's foreign and domestic policy will have to shake the nation's political and religious culture to dislodge so durable a metaphor. What we can be sure of, however, is that most Republican candidates in 2010 and 2012 will promise to reclaim and rebuild the lost city of America. Sarah Palin, keeping the message upbeat and in the present tense, reassured her Facebook friends this past Thanksgiving, "We truly remain the shining city upon a hill that the colonial leader John Winthrop implored us to be."

Republicans may succeed in making the "city on a hill" an effective campaign strategy, but all the attention they give to this symbol masks a deeper political and cultural consensus about America's calling. Most conservatives forget—if they ever knew—that it was a liberal Democrat, John F. Kennedy, who introduced the biblical and Puritan phrase into modern presidential rhetoric in 1961. More than that, they fail to notice that the political Left continues to reaffirm America's hilltop preeminence. What looks like a critique of the Redeemer Nation often turns out, behind all the earnest hand-wringing, to be liberal frus-

tration at the "wrong" transformationist agenda being implemented at home and abroad. Contrary to its claims, the Left doesn't typically fear the mix of church and state or the blending of religion and war at all. It sounds like it does, but its real objective is to get the "right" theology fused with the "right" domestic and foreign policy.

A case in point is T. Walter Herbert's *Faith-Based War*, the sixth in a new series of books on religion and violence from a small press in the UK. Herbert is Emeritus Professor of American Literature and Culture at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas. He approaches foreign affairs not as a historian, political theorist, or policy analyst. He writes instead as a modern literary theorist interested in the economic and political oppression of marginalized groups and in the "cultural politics" of novels, music, movies, TV shows, and the theater of presidential rhetoric and images. He also writes as a sincerely religious man who has exchanged his Christian upbringing for a vague but activist faith that operates in a twilight of theological uncertainty about a mysterious divinity he can only bring himself to call "G*d." Certainty breeds violence, Herbert believes, and he directs his creedless, borderless, ecumenical religion toward "shared action for the sake of social justice."

Herbert's central concern is what he calls the "religious catastrophe" of the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the "catastrophic success" U.S. forces encountered there. But his book is about much more than Iraq. Herbert's quirky literary and theological exploration of American foreign policy takes him all the way back to the first colonial settlements in New England. The Puritans' "city on a hill," and its subsequent career as a cultural trope, dominates at least the first half of his book. But Herbert's task is not to undermine America's identity as that city. Rather, he sets out to unmask the alleged perversion of that identity—or, more accurately, to present an alternative city on a hill, one equally authentic to the American past but largely sub-

merged throughout the nation's history. Herbert doesn't hesitate to call on his fellow citizens "to make our country a 'city on a hill' worthy of emulation, and worth fighting for ...". But performing that rehabilitation requires the rejection of a deeply embedded "Christian Americanism" in favor of a "counter-tradition" of tolerance and social justice. Herbert sees George W. Bush and his "faith-based" war in Iraq as the culmination of a progressively degenerate tradition that combines the worst of the chosen nation "delusion" with all the swagger and violence of the frontier gunslinger.

What exactly are these opposing traditions that battle for America's soul? It is hard not to think of Augustine's *City of God* while reading Herbert's retelling of American history. The Bishop of Hippo is certainly not one of his heroes, for reasons that become obvious by the book's end. Nevertheless, Herbert's account of America's two cities on a hill becomes a wholly secularized version of Augustine's theology of history. The heavenly and earthly cities become merely two earthly cities. The drama of salvation becomes a mundane event, a parody even of the spiritual warfare between the City of God and the City of Man. This doesn't appear on the face of it to be Herbert's intention, but such a template makes the core of his analysis much easier to see and explain.

Herbert begins his story conventionally with the Massachusetts Bay Colony—a parochial perspective that eclipses the rest of English North America but one that keeps his schematic treatment of American history tidy. The two cities descend from John Winthrop and Roger Williams. Winthrop heads the equivalent of Cain's "ungodly" line and Williams the equivalent of Abel's "godly" line (or "g*dly" line, I suppose). Winthrop's city loves its chosen-ness, wages imperial wars against the not chosen, and is religiously authoritarian. Williams's city, in contrast, loves "freedom of conscience," cultivates goodwill with native tribes, and practices communitarian values. Winthrop's city becomes predatory while Williams's becomes exemplary.

From these two cities follow—in very straight lines—the tradition and counter-tradition that divide American history down to the present. Winthrop and his “theocrats” engendered Manifest Destiny, capitalist free enterprise, the frontier mentality, moral blindness, Ronald Reagan’s ethic of national self-indulgence, and ultimately Bush’s invasion of Iraq, including, yes, the torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib. Williams, in contrast, launched a dissident tradition of tolerance, democracy, human rights, anti-imperialism, critical self-examination, moral acuity, and Jimmy Carter’s ethic of national self-discipline.

OFFENDED BY THE RIGHT’S **SECULARIZED “CITY ON A HILL”** OF IMPERIALISM AND **CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC HEGEMONY**, HE EMBRACES THE LEFT’S SECULARIZED **“CITY ON A HILL”** OF **INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL JUSTICE**.

Conservatives may find themselves agreeing with more than a few of Herbert’s broader critiques of U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, he quotes approvingly from the work of Walter McDougall and Andrew Bacevich. But there is deep mischief at work in this book. By his last chapter, Herbert arrives at a theological grounding for the two cities that is sure to trouble orthodox Christians. He sees the U.S. Army’s resort to torture at Abu Ghraib as the natural outworking of Winthrop’s predatory theocracy, and more fundamentally as a result of a “perverted” Christian theology of original sin, divine wrath, and substitutionary atonement as taught by St. Augustine, Jonathan Edwards, and the modern Religious Right. Bluntly, America tortures its enemies because its pastors and politicians believe in a God who tortured his own Son on the Cross and tortures unrepentant man in Hell.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Herbert prefers the Jesus who died not to pay for man’s sins but who died at the hands of a brutal world power threatened by His revolutionary political message of social justice, liberation from oppression, and

radical human equality. More broadly, “Jesus’s gospel posed a threat not only to the Romans but to all social arrangements in which stigmatized classes of G*d’s children are forced to accept a subservient place.” Clearly America is the new Rome in this 21st-century passion play. And a new type of Christ has appeared to rebuke the American regime and expose its injustice: the figure of the “hooded man” from the Abu Ghraib prison. Herbert describes this “haunting image” as a man “standing on a box with his arms outstretched, with electric wires hanging from his hands. The victim is compelled to maintain his balance on the narrow

box, with his vision cut off. He cannot see that the wires on his hands are attached to nothing.”

A silhouette of the “hooded man” in the posture of the crucified Christ graces the front cover of Herbert’s book. Never mind that this is a prisoner of war. The author leaves no doubt about his meaning: this innocent “victim,” this modern Man of Sorrows, “is an icon that reproaches the religious perversion at stake in the invasion of Iraq, in particular the misconception of America as a ‘city on a hill’ that is entitled to seek limitless material abundance at the expense of others, and is exempt from judgment against any standard beyond itself.” “Hooded Man,” he sums up, “represents the shame and disgrace that have accrued to the nation from following this version of America’s exemplary status, a model for other nations to abhor.”

In trying to expose the flawed political theology that may indeed animate too much of American foreign policy, Herbert simply exchanges one troubling political theology for another. Offended by the Right’s secularized “city on a hill” of imperialism and cultural and eco-

nomic hegemony, he embraces the Left’s secularized “city on a hill” of international social justice. Disturbed by the Right’s politicized Jesus who endorses “Christian Americanism,” he embraces the Left’s politicized Jesus who advocates a new order of humanitarian sympathy. Lost in these false options is the possibility that the city on a hill has nothing whatsoever to do with the United States—not now and not ever—and that Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world.

Also lost on Herbert is just how much he and Bush might have in common—at least with Bush’s own self-understanding as portrayed by chief speechwriter Michael Gerson in his 2008 book, *Heroic Conservatism*. Bush’s idealistic domestic and foreign policy pursued an agenda consciously at odds with traditionalist and realist conservatives within the Republican Party. Bush set out on a course of Big Government intervention in public education, expanded social-welfare spending, and global democratic revolution in the name of social justice and humanitarian compassion. The troubling irony for those conservatives whom the Bush White House marginalized is how much of what passed for a conservative agenda between 2001 and 2009 fits Herbert’s depiction of the counter-tradition. Bush’s “compassionate conservatism” tried awfully hard to sound like the modern version of the counter-tradition. Why that is and what that might mean for the future of conservatism ought to demand the attention of concerned scholars, voters, and traditional Christians.

Ultimately, Herbert’s framework, while venturing to explain so much about American history, helps only to account for what divides humanitarian transformationists among themselves and not for the larger theological and cultural fault lines that separate one American tradition from another. ■

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[*Crisis and Command: A History of Executive Power From George Washington to George W. Bush*, John Yoo, Kaplan Publishing, 544 pages]

A Brief For Bush

By Joseph Margulies

JOHN YOO, the embattled law professor and former attorney with the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, has completed his third and final book on the power of the presidency. Yoo, of course, was the principal author of the most controversial legal memos of the Bush years. His work gave the administration cover for many of its most problematic programs, including indefinite detention at Guantanamo and torture by the CIA. Given this résumé, it has become an immensely popular parlor game to launch personal attacks on Professor Yoo. No reproach seems to satisfy his many detractors, who vilify him in print and protest him in public. Websites are devoted to his pillory. At a minimum, we are told, he should be indicted as a war criminal, fired from the academy, and disbarred from the practice of law.

Such insults are easy to level but harder to defend. I say this despite my long professional engagement with Yoo's handiwork. I have been involved in challenges to post-9/11 detentions since late 2001. I was counsel of record in *Rasul v. Bush*, the first case to hold that Guantanamo was not a prison beyond the law. I am also counsel for Abu Zubaydah, the man for whose interrogation the CIA sought, and Yoo wrote, the infamous torture memos in August 2002. At every step of the way over these last seven years, I have confronted legal arguments crafted by Yoo—arguments I consider legally deficient and morally bankrupt. But I have never doubted that he sincerely believed the president had the authority to act as he did. He is mistaken, not

malign. My criticism has always been with his ideas, not his character.

And the idea behind his latest book, *Crisis and Command: A History of Executive Power From George Washington to George W. Bush*, is simple: throughout American history, crisis has inspired constitutional daring, and the race to presidential greatness goes not to the leader who hews most faithfully to the constitutional text but to the one most willing to bend the document to meet the perceived demands of the day. It is a disappointing contribution to the literature on the Constitution and the American presidency, and beneath a scholar of Yoo's ability.

In his introduction, Yoo mocks the raft of writers who saw a return of the imperial presidency in the policies of his former employer. They just don't understand. The reader settles down for the coming donnybrook, in which the learned professor will marshal what he perceives as the lesson of American history to prove that presidential greatness requires inherent authority—the prerogative to ignore the will of Congress and the fetters of the Constitution when the national interest demands it, as when war clouds our visage. (That is what the historian Arthur Schlesinger meant by the imperial presidency when he coined the term and what he described at length in his 1973 Pulitzer Prize-winning book of the same name.) But the proof never comes. Professor Yoo is a creative, even inventive scholar. Yet even he cannot make an argument that the great sweep of American history sustains a case for inherent presidential power beyond the Constitution. It is simply not true.

The most thorough account of these issues during the founding and early Republic is Abe Sofaer's classic from a generation ago, *War, Foreign Affairs, and Constitutional Power: The Origins*. Professor Sofaer, then at Columbia Law School, later a Reagan administration appointee, and now a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, carefully documents the many occasions when presidents have deliberately pursued consti-

tutionally questionable behavior that could, or did, lead to military engagements. He concludes, "At no time did the executive claim 'inherent' power to initiate military action."

Lincoln, for instance, accused President Polk of acting unconstitutionally when he unilaterally provoked the Mexican War in 1848. The founders, Lincoln said, had "resolved to so frame the Constitution that no one man should hold the power of bringing this oppression upon us." Yet 13 years later, Lincoln assembled the militia, enlarged the Army and Navy beyond their authorized numbers, suspended *habeas*, spent unappropriated funds, and instituted a naval blockade of the southern ports, all without congressional approval. But Lincoln understood that his actions were beyond the Constitution, and that he would later be accountable to Congress and the American public. Never did he pretend these steps were justified by some inherent right to act as he saw fit.

As Yoo well knows, the claim to an inherent right has a much more modest historical pedigree, beginning only in 1950 with President Truman's defense of his decision to dispatch troops to Korea without congressional authorization. Dean Acheson, Truman's secretary of state, later took credit for this constitutional innovation: it was not for nothing that Acheson titled his autobiography *Present at the Creation*.

Since Truman, the fortunes of the imperial presidency have waxed and waned. Every postwar president has claimed some version of the power of inherent right, though some, like Eisenhower, made relatively less use of it than others, like Johnson. But this postwar experience proves there is no correlation between presidential greatness and constitutional license. The Nixon presidency, for instance, represented the high-water mark of that thinking—until George W. Bush at least. Nixon demonstrated, to the nation's considerable regret, that should the ineffable demands of national security be enough to unleash a president's inherent author-

ity, then it is just a matter of time before domestic political dissenters and “enemies” at home come to be regarded as threats to national security. “When the president does it,” Nixon later explained, “that means that it is not illegal.” Wisely, Professor Yoo does not number Nixon among the great presidents. Yet his theory cannot explain Nixon’s many shortcomings.

The lesson here is that many who have occupied the Oval Office at times have been, shall we say, constitutionally adventuresome. The Founders fully expected as much. And the wisdom of their insight was not the fatalistic resignation that it would happen but the utopian vision that it might be harnessed. They hoped to design a political system in which no part may long operate without the aid of the others, so that the natural and salutary impulse by one

branch to chaff at the limits of its power would be checked by the competing impulse of the other, interdependent branches to do the same. The result, they hoped, would be “a machine that would go of itself,” as once was said of the Constitution.

The presidential impulse to take liberties with the Constitution is thus not a sign that some presidents are great but that all are human. For that reason, it bears no relationship to excellence. In arguing otherwise, Professor Yoo makes an elementary logical error: because great presidents have bent the Constitution, he thinks greatness must require it. This confuses a characteristic with a cause; nearly all presidents have bent the Constitution, and Lord knows we cannot count them all as exceptional. The characteristic, in other words, cannot explain the condition. Instead, presidential greatness, to the extent we can define it, emerges as the unpredictable convergence of character and circumstance—extraordinary leaders who made the most of grave challenges and unique opportunities.

It was George W. Bush who demonstrated most clearly the difference between breaking the mold and breaking the law. Yoo maintains that the policies of the Bush administration “fell within the precedents set by earlier Presidents.” But that is not defensible. The most controversial policies of the Bush years—including indefinite detention without due process, legalized torture, and warrantless domestic surveillance of American citizens—shattered American legal and moral traditions. In each case, the Bush administration claimed an inherent right, ostensibly justified by the crisis at hand, to exceed the Constitution, ignore Congress, and evade the Judiciary. At the same time, the administration adopted an unprecedented commitment to secrecy, which to this day has prevented the complete scope of executive misfeasance from coming to light. It was, by design, unfettered executive power deliberately divorced from public or political accountability.

Professor Yoo remains an unapologetic booster for these policies and defends them by dropping all pretense to scholarship. He repeats the old canard about torture as the one indispensable means to get “timely information from captured al Qaeda terrorists.” Tellingly, he does not say that the information would be reliable and avoids the mounting evidence that the torture program has repeatedly produced false leads, including the catastrophic claim of a link between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. He insists that warrantless domestic surveillance is necessary “to prevent a devastating attack on the American homeland,” but does not stoop to justify his hyperbole. And he mocks the decision by the Obama administration to protect prisoners from “humiliating and degrading treatment” and “outrages on personal dignity,” as required by the Geneva Conventions.

Professor Yoo is not a student of the American presidency and does not claim either to advance new constitutional arguments or to have unearthed new primary sources. It is impossible to avoid the suspicion that his real objective is not so much scholarship as redemption. If President Bush, against all odds, becomes the next great man, known to history as the president who reshaped the office to meet the challenges of his time, then Professor Yoo—the legal architect of the attempted transformation—rises like a phoenix from the burned wreckage of a ruined reputation, no longer a pariah but a sage.

History, of course, always has the last word, and no one should be fool enough to predict with confidence whether the passage of time will be kind to the memory of our 43rd president. But one lesson of American presidential history is already clear: greatness, like respect, requires considerably more than an accumulation of power. It is a lesson that John Yoo has not yet learned. ■

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[*Obamanomics: How Barack Obama Is Bankrupting You and Enriching His Wall Street Friends, Corporate Lobbyists, and Union Bosses*, Timothy P. Carney, Regnery, 256 pages]

Big Government, Big Business, Big Rip-off

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

THE RIGHT HAS GONE MAD, it's true. The conservative head, already suffering traumatic brain injury after insisting that pre-emptive war, waterboarding, and debt are enduring Western values, finally went blank when Barack Obama ascended the federal throne. Tea-party activists say that a Kenyan Nazi is readying a death panel for Sarah Palin. Fascism is liberal nowadays; communism, too. It's all connected. Glenn Beck is chalking lines between Keith Olberman, Levi Johnston, and Leon Trotsky. How can the Right fight an enemy that will not release its birth certificate?

Fortunately, Timothy P. Carney has a cure for such dementia: muckraking journalism, of the sort he ably exhibits in *Obamanomics: How Barack Obama Is Bankrupting You and Enriching His Wall Street Friends, Corporate Lobbyists, and Union Bosses*. Don't let the Fox-appearance-fetching title throw you: George W. Bush comes in for nearly as much abuse as Obama. A reporter for the *Washington Examiner* and a protégé of the late Robert Novak, Carney has carved out a career of picking apart Washington's latest regulations on industry and exposing the lobbyists and corporations getting rich in the name of public interest.

In *Obamanomics*, he demonstrates time and again how Big Business and Big Government are natural allies: an incumbent business loves nothing better than a regulator that raises overhead

costs for its smaller competitors or introduces legislation that ensures all Americans are compelled to buy its products.

Carney doesn't bother drawing ideological lines between Rahm Emanuel and Karl Marx. He is too busy documenting how Emanuel deals with his former partners at Goldman Sachs or reporting the activities of former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, who now splits his time between advising the president on healthcare reform and cashing checks from health-industry clients.

Carney points out how the media treat nefarious partnerships between large corporations and government regulators as a surprise or as "proof that the case for reform is overwhelming," when in fact cooperation is routine and often involves easily discernible financial interests. As he puts it, "The economic law underlying *Obamanomics*—opaque to most journalists and contrary to conventional wisdom—is this: increased government control centralizes industries and favors the biggest businesses." So while liberal bloggers like Matt Yglesias and Ezra Klein welcome the support of red-state behemoth retailer Wal-Mart on their side of the healthcare debate, Carney points out that Wal-Mart is using government regulation to raise overhead costs for Target, which offers fewer health benefits than Wal-Mart.

Obamanomics also puts the lie to Obama's campaign rhetoric, in which he excoriated corrupt Republicans for promoting deregulation because they were subservient to large corporate interests and told lobbyists that their days were numbered. Obama claimed, for instance, that McCain had voted 23 times against "alternative energy like solar, and wind, and biodiesel." Carney notes, however, that most of these votes were against ethanol subsidies—a government program that acts as a simple wealth-transfer scheme from taxpayers to agribusiness giant Archer Daniels Midland, with no broader economic or environmental benefits.

Chapter 9, "GE: The For-Profit Arm of the Obama Administration," is worth the price of the book and provides a perfect case study. Just days after Obama's inauguration, General Electric CEO Jeff Immelt wrote to shareholders, "The global economy, and capitalism, will be 'reset' in several important ways. The interaction between government and business will change forever. In a reset economy, the government will be a regulator; and also an industry policy champion, a financier, and a key partner." Translation: Washington will subsidize our industry, provide grants for our research, and mandate our products for environmental reasons. *Kaching!* "The company makes light bulbs and refrigerators, sure," writes Carney, "but it also has a finance arm, a transportation arm, a healthcare arm, a communications arm, and more. The above letter from Immelt reveals what these arms all have in common: they all reach out for government favors."

Let us count the ways. GE launched its own PAC to solicit donations from its employees for candidates "who share GE's values and goals." Unsurprisingly, Obama received more money from GE employees than any other politician. Immelt now sits on Obama's economic recovery board and enjoys a weekly phone call with White House economic adviser Austan Goolsbee. In the past decade, GE has spent more on lobbying than BlueCross, Exxon, or Altria, the owners of Philip Morris. Former Sens. Trent Lott (R) and John Breaux (D) lobby for GE. And former Rep. Dick Gephardt, tribune of the working man, lobbies for NBC Universal, which as we go to press is a subsidiary of the GE conglomerate. If by any chance Obama forgets to ask himself "What would Jeff Immelt do?" before signing legislation, GE has recruited Linda Daschle, wife of that authentic North Dakotan voice of reform, Tom, as another of its lobbyists.

Where's the profit in all this influence? For one, GE has been investing in "carbon offset" assets that have almost no value unless the Obama administra-

tion institutes its cap-and-trade energy plans. Sure enough, HR 2454, the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009, is a GE lobbyist's dream come true. The bill aims to provide manufacturers with "incentives" to sell energy-efficient appliances. Those enticements would mean that GE stands to reap \$75 of taxpayer money for each dishwasher it sells until 2013, \$200 for each refrigerator, and up to \$300 for each hot-water heater. As an added bonus, GE gets tax breaks and billions in loan guarantees for its wind-power projects.

More egregiously, GE lobbied for the ban on its own incandescent light bulbs, a reliable product that for more than a century has turned a profit and employed thousands of factory workers in Kentucky and Ohio. Why would they do that? So they could blame "government regulation" for closing down their costly American plants, of course. GE manufactures its more expensive fluorescent bulbs—generally hated, but now federally mandated—in China and the Philippines.

Though Carney spends the bulk of *Obamanomics* uncovering the dirty deals and following the money as it sloshes around K Street, he does take one chapter to suggest a method of political resistance, and an intriguing one: libertarian populism. He sets out an opposition agenda for the GOP that includes making HMO's compete for business across state lines and lifting reimportation bans on pharmaceuticals, thus forcing drug companies to work against Canadian and European price controls. Carney's Republicans would end energy subsidies, oppose cap-and-trade, and recall the bailouts to pay down the national debt. Carney even picks up the banner for Ron Paul's dream of auditing and abolishing the Federal Reserve.

Such a populist-libertarian agenda would seek to shutter the den of corporate welfare known as the Department of Commerce. In its place, Carney would implement Cato Institute scholar Stephen Slivinski's plan for a bipartisan anti-corporate-welfare commission. The

commission would have authority to send a bill to Congress closing down all corporate giveaways. Political opponents would be forced to defend in public the enrichment of Goldman Sachs, GE, and Boeing over any other cause that might be looking for a \$100 billion government handout. "Imagine the debate," fantasizes Carney, "Obama arguing explicitly on GM's and Goldman Sachs' side, with Republicans arguing to protect taxpayers and Main Street. It would be a good political cudgel, as well as excellent policy."

Perhaps Carney lets his anti-statist fancies soar too high. He even dreams of a constitutional amendment to ban the government from buying companies or offering private businesses subsidized loans. And pork might fly. Still, positive reform requires this kind of zeal.

Carney admits that his ideal GOP would "turn off traditional Republican donors" such as Boeing. He insists, however, that Republicans can reorient their income streams. Corporate funding of the Right has always been skittish, short-term, and issue-driven. "[Republicans] still could haul cash from rich people," Carney suggests, "but from entrepreneurs rather than Fortune 500 CEOs."

Obamanomics offers an attractive fusion of populism and libertarianism. Yet that blend could be taken further both politically and theoretically. It's fun to imagine what Republicans could do if they labeled Jeff Immelt a welfare queen and attacked Goldman Sachs executives as free-riding loafers. It would be the completion of a century-long process of realignment. Bank-hating heartlanders could finally sign up with the party of Nelson Rockefeller. But why not include conservatism's inadequate, yet politically potent, cultural populism in the same anti-corporate coalition? After all, most Americans do not suffer lectures from "diversity consultants" at their local town hall but in their corporate office parks. Outside of state-funded schools, the government is not responsible for the cultural revolution that traditionalists detest. The average American

is more likely to encounter ruthlessly enforced speech codes, racial-awareness training, and instruction in "tolerance" at the behest of his employer. It's time to say so.

Though the greedy collusion and hypocrisy Carney exposes should be sufficient to motivate a political movement, the intellectuals and polemicists of the Right need to reconnect with a broader, richer conservative philosophy—a worldview that distrusts the corporatist state in all its forms, not just in its individual corruptions. Let them rediscover Justus Möser's criticisms of large combines. Let our scribblers dilate on Hilaire Belloc's vision of the servile state in which government and business co-opt us into indentured labor in the name of economic security. Let them rhapsodize, Ayn Rand-like, on the erotic qualities of entrepreneurs and the flaccidity of public and private bureaucracy. Or how about using James Burnham's *Managerial Revolution* as inspiration? He connected the emergence of the corporation as the dominant economic unit with the flourishing of the executive branch. Conservatism never should have been mere apologetics for state-capitalism.

If *Obamanomics* and the ideas that inform Carney's writing infiltrate the tea-party set, American conservatism has a shot at becoming something worthwhile again. But the book may be just as important for self-styled anti-movement conservatives. Localists, traditionalists, and other politically endangered species usually turn against libertarian policy goals. They fear the unregulated corrosion of traditional norms and values by the market. Yet as Carney shows us, Big Business, far from regarding Washington as its enemy, sees the state as a "financier," "champion," and "partner"—to quote GE's Immelt. If you want to whack big corporations, aim at Washington first. ■

Michael Brendan Dougherty is a former TAC associate editor and a 2009-10 Phillips Journalism Fellow.

[*Koestler: The Literary and Political Odyssey of a Twentieth-Century Skeptic*, Michael Scammell, Random House, 720 pages]

True Believer

By Lee Congdon

AFTER READING Michael Scammell's epic biography of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Harold Harris, Arthur Koestler's literary executor, offered the biographer/translator exclusive access to Koestler's papers and introductions to his friends and colleagues. Scammell jumped at the chance "to explore the life and writings of this extraordinarily gifted and charismatic individual" and set out on a scholarly trail that seemed to have no end. For 20 years, he worked at the Koestler Archive in Edinburgh, traveled the world, and interviewed countless men and women willing to share memories of the controversial writer.

Having reached his destination at last, Scammell has given us a full report of the discoveries he made along the way. *Koestler: The Literary and Political Odyssey of a Twentieth-Century Skeptic* contains fascinating details, many of them previously unknown, about its protagonist's adventures in places and times that read like chapter headings for the 20th century: Palestine under British mandate, Weimar Germany in its death agony, Soviet Russia in the 1930s, Spain during the Civil War, France at the outbreak of World War II, England during wartime, France after Liberation, Israel at birth.

Rather less fascinating are the multiple and graphic accounts of Koestler's notorious misconduct—bouts with the bottle, boorish and predatory behavior, and appalling treatment of women. Scammell offers manic-depression and instances of extraordinary generosity as mitigating factors. But the problem remains: he dwells on Koestler's life at the expense of his work.

Koestler would not be remembered today had he merely made us more

aware of the evils of self-indulgence or had he remained in the world of everyday journalism, a world he entered by chance while eking out an existence in Palestine during the late 1920s. Always a thoughtful man, he understood early on that the post-Christian world was haunted by the specter of nihilism. In response, he, like so many other 20th-century intellectuals, went in search of a new faith.

As Scammell points out, "religious yearnings had been apparent in [Koestler's] work from the start." Born in turn-of-the-century Budapest to a family of assimilated Jews, he remained ambivalent about his Jewishness, primarily because, like Henri Bergson, he did not wish to dissociate himself from the Jews in their times of tribulation. His youthful attraction to Zionism should therefore be understood as a spiritual quest, not an identity crisis.

When Zionism began to lose its religious appeal, Koestler turned to communism: "the God that failed," he and other ex-communists later confessed. While working as an editor for the Ullstein newspaper chain in Berlin, he joined the Communist Party and for several years served what he regarded from the outset as a secular religion. In 1932, he made a pilgrimage to the Red Mecca, the Soviet Union, where he planned to gather material for a book showing how an alleged "anticommunist" had metamorphosed into a communist after viewing firsthand the achievements of the first Five-Year Plan.

Although he observed life in the USSR through communist lenses, Koestler's journalistic instincts and residual honesty began to work a change in him. It was the time of the "terror-famine" in Ukraine. At train stops he saw, but affected to disregard, "infants pitiful and terrifying with limbs like sticks, puffed bellies, big cadaverous heads lolling on thin necks." When party leaders read the propaganda manuscript he dutifully produced, they concluded that he was less than reliable and sent him back to the West.

With Hitler in power in Germany, Koestler joined the emigré community

in Paris, where he worked for Willy Münzenberg, the Comintern's propaganda impresario. With Münzenberg's encouragement, he went to Spain, then in the throes of civil war, to obtain evidence of German and Italian intervention on the side of General Franco's Nationalists. He was arrested and imprisoned in Seville. Koestler did not know that he had been sentenced to death, yet neither did he know he had not been. As a result of this "dialogue with death," he experienced what Freud called the "oceanic feeling," a sense of communion with a transcendent reality. His life was never to be the same.

Released in exchange for a captured Nationalist pilot, Koestler resigned from the Communist Party in 1938 and wrote the novel that made him famous, *Darkness at Noon*. Based upon Soviet purge trials and inspired by Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, the novel tells the story of Nikolai Rubashov, a veteran revolutionary who is caught up in the Terror and persuaded to confess to imaginary crimes as a last service to the Party—if not as just punishment for crimes he did commit in the Party's name.

After breaking with communism, Koestler committed himself with equal fervor to the cause of anticommunism—writing essays, delivering speeches, and debating communists and fellow travelers, most notably French intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the brilliant philosopher who answered *Darkness at Noon* in *Humanism and Terror: An Essay on the Communist Problem*. (Scammell unfortunately does not include a detailed analysis of this book, which betrays much about the totalitarian mind.)

Koestler's work for the Congress for Cultural Freedom came at a time, the early 1950s, when his anticommunism had become all-consuming. Secretly funded by the CIA, the CCF waged cultural war on communism, but in the end Koestler's go-for-the-jugular approach to prosecuting that war proved too confrontational for the Agency, which favored a more subtle strategy. He there-

fore cut his organizational ties, though he continued to contribute to CCF publications such as *Encounter*. In that magazine's pages, and in a novel entitled *The Age of Longing*, Koestler testified to his pessimism with regard to a West that, like his fictional American heroine, possessed "no core, no faith, no fixed values."

For all its importance, anticommunism proved to be no more satisfying than communism as a cause for which to live and die. Hoping that he might find light in the East, Koestler set out, late in 1958, on a four-month pilgrimage to India and Japan. But as Scammell reports, he came away disappointed. If anything, he found the two countries to be "spiritually sicker" and "more estranged from a living faith" than the West. It was time, he concluded, to return to his first love. "The pursuit of science in itself," he wrote in his autobiographical *Arrow in the Blue*, "is never materialistic. It is a search for the principles of law and order in the universe, and as such an essentially religious endeavour."

Scammell devotes most of the final section of his book to Koestler's scientific works. Although he treats them with respect, he shares the majority, but mistaken, view that they represent a falling off from *Darkness at Noon* and Koestler's autobiographical works. Eyebrows may understandably have been raised by Koestler's effort to revive Lamarckism, but not by his informed questioning of Darwinism or his reflections on the relationship between science and religion. In *The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man's Changing Vision of the Universe* and *The Act of Creation*, he argued, quite rightly, that religion was an important aid, not an insuperable barrier, to scientists. The greatest of them, including Johannes Kepler, with whom Koestler identified on a deeply personal level, were religious, though they did not subscribe to any orthodoxy; their faith, like that of Koestler himself, consisted of their acknowledgment of a reality beyond the material and "a belief that there is a harmony of the spheres—that the universe is not a tale told by an idiot."

Scammell would have gained a fuller appreciation of Koestler's scientific work if he had paid closer attention to the parallel lines of inquiry pursued by Michael Polanyi, the brilliant scientist-philosopher (also of Jewish-Hungarian origin) who was Koestler's friend and with whom he had many stimulating discussions concerning science and religion. Even with respect to Koestler's much maligned interest in "the secular mysticism of parapsychology," Polanyi kept an open mind. In his indispensable work, *Personal Knowledge*, he wrote, with his friend clearly in mind, "the evidence for [extra-sensory perception] is ignored today by scientists in the hope that it will one day find some trivial explanation. In this they may be right, but I respect those too who think they may be wrong."

Among other mysterious phenomena, Koestler was particularly intrigued by coincidences, which he viewed as manifestations of a universal law of nature that operated independently of the recognized laws of causation. A "coincidence" was for him a mystical event, a window through which to glimpse ultimate reality, a proof of universal harmony. That is why, at his death by suicide in 1983—he was suffering from Parkinson's disease and leukemia—he left virtually his entire estate to Edinburgh University to establish a chair in parapsychology.

Koestler had often thought about death, and as he prepared to end his life he embraced Schopenhauer's Buddhist-like view that he would be shedding his individuality and merging with the All. In his suicide note, he wrote of "some timid hopes for a depersonalized after-life beyond due confines of space, time and matter and beyond the limits of our comprehension." One is left to wonder why, in the subtitle to this well-written biography, its author characterizes as a "skeptic" a man who possessed such an irrepressible will to believe. ■

Lee Congdon is the author of Seeing Red: Hungarian Intellectuals in Exile and the Challenge of Communism and George Kennan: A Writing Life.

Secret Police

Continued from page 12

are appropriate for law-enforcement seizure of electronic communications? To what extent can we even claim property rights to information about us or by us once it's in someone else's hands? In a wired age of tiny and ubiquitous detection and recording devices, where all of our communications go over third-party systems, can any vestige of 20th-century notions of private life experiences truly survive?

All of these debates about principles and processes seem beside the point in the shadow of two huge structures under construction in Utah and Texas. As NSA historian James Bamford explained in the *New York Review of Books* in November, the Utah facility will be "a million square feet ... one-third larger than the US Capitol and will use the same amount of energy as every house in Salt Lake City combined ... [it will] house trillions of phone calls, e-mail messages, and data trails: Web searches, parking receipts, bookstore visits, and other digital 'pocket litter' ... the NSA is also completing work on another data archive, this one in San Antonio, Texas, which will be nearly the size of the Alamodome." Their data storage capacity will probably exceed that of every computer in the world; their legal and technical ability to snoop, data mine, and draw conclusions about all of us will be nearly unstoppable.

But the public doesn't seem concerned enough about any of this to make a political fuss. When I asked the EFF's Bankston if the change in administrations had made any positive impact on government policy toward privacy and surveillance, he answered quickly, "None." ■

Brian Doherty is a senior editor at Reason magazine and author of This is Burning Man, Radicals for Capitalism, and Gun Control on Trial.



TV or Not TV?

In my homeboy novelist John Gardner's *October Light*, the cranky Vermont patriot James Page, annoyed by television's "endless, simpering advertising ... blasphemy

and high treason," lifts his 12-gauge and blasts his sister's set "to hell, right back where it came from." Elvis did likewise with his pistol when Robert Goulet filled the screen, though last I heard it was perfectly legal to shoot ham.

Haughty dismissals of TV can be tiresome, if not as tiresome as the idiot box itself. I had the same Marcia Brady reveries as every other 14-year-old boy, and I am none—well, not much, anyway—the worse for the wear.

Sometime over the last decade or two—at my advanced age the years pour out as sand through the hourglass—we simply stopped watching television. Or very nearly so, as I masochistically kept an eye on the Buffalo Bills, and my wife and daughter chose a favorite show each season (most recently, "The Office").

Until last spring, that is, when from every mountaintop rang the message to convert, ye analog heathens, and worship the digital god. I am afraid that instead of falling to my knees I wallowed in techno-nescience. Since I had never bothered to learn what an analog broadcast was, I sure wasn't going to brush up on digital. Ignorance, if not bliss, at least saves me from "The View."

So we let expire the food-stamp-like coupon for a converter box the government had sent. Our negligence felt like a minor act of sedition. Other than the Bills' latest autumnal collapse, we haven't missed a thing.

With Christmas approaching, a much-loved relative generously offered to buy

our daughter a TV for her room. We said no thanks. She asked again, rather more insistently. Our refusal was—well, my family is used to my quirks, but our stubbornness in this matter seemed so ... Amish.

I was going to present, in my defense, the abundant evidence that children with televisions in their rooms score lower on standardized tests, but since I despise those tests my hypocrisy meter buzzed. Besides, why should I have to defend myself for barring the door to Bill O'Reilly, Ellen DeGeneres, Katie Couric, and "Two and a Half Men"?

Russell Kirk famously threw a TV out of a second-story window of his home in Mecosta, Michigan, but the damned things are like zombies: they keep coming on, no matter how furiously one fights them off. My friend Kara Beer tells me that one of Kirk's daughters had friends audiotape episodes of "Charlie's Angels," to which she would listen intently at recess. (I love that image: listening to "Charlie's Angels.")

Like most Americans under 60, I grew up with the living room television as an essential appliance. I can still sing a lusty chorus of the theme songs to "The Brady Bunch" and "The Partridge Family." At odd moments I wonder where Susan Dey is.

But the omnipresence of the box has become oppressive. The idea that at this very moment a teenager in Butte, a down-and-outer in El Paso, and a grandmother in the Great Smoky Mountains

are absorbing the same televised soma fills me with dull dread. Television has done more to erase local culture and color than any other noxious device in our place-effacing empire. To welcome it into one's home is like inviting in a vampire, a selective service agent, or a highwayman bearing an eminent domain check.

A new pestilence, the political talk show, has infected discussion in diners and coffee shops and other free-speech nooks in the land of the discreet. When I was a stripling, politically interested folks who hadn't been broken to the liberal/conservative bit often had eclectic views, offering refreshingly human alternatives to the cramped prisons of Americans for Democratic Action and the American Conservative Union.

Today, a distressing number of such folks, having spent too much time being drained of vital fluids in cable's morgue, parrot the inanities of the Hannitys. Go Team Red! Go Team Blue! Those are people who died dyed.

My friend Carolyn Chute has it right. In October she organized a "TV Shoot" so that her friends in Maine could bag a glassy rectangle or two.

Does this now verge on thought-crime? When I worked in the U.S. Senate long ago, a lobbyist from the City of New York informed me that citizens possess a "right to cable TV." Tucked away, one presumes, beyond life and liberty but within the pursuit of horniness. Yet is shooting a TV felonious assault or felicitous assault?

"We're caught in a trap/ We can't walk out," sang Elvis, but if the off switch doesn't work, James Page's 12-gauge ought to do the trick. ■

Shelby Foote

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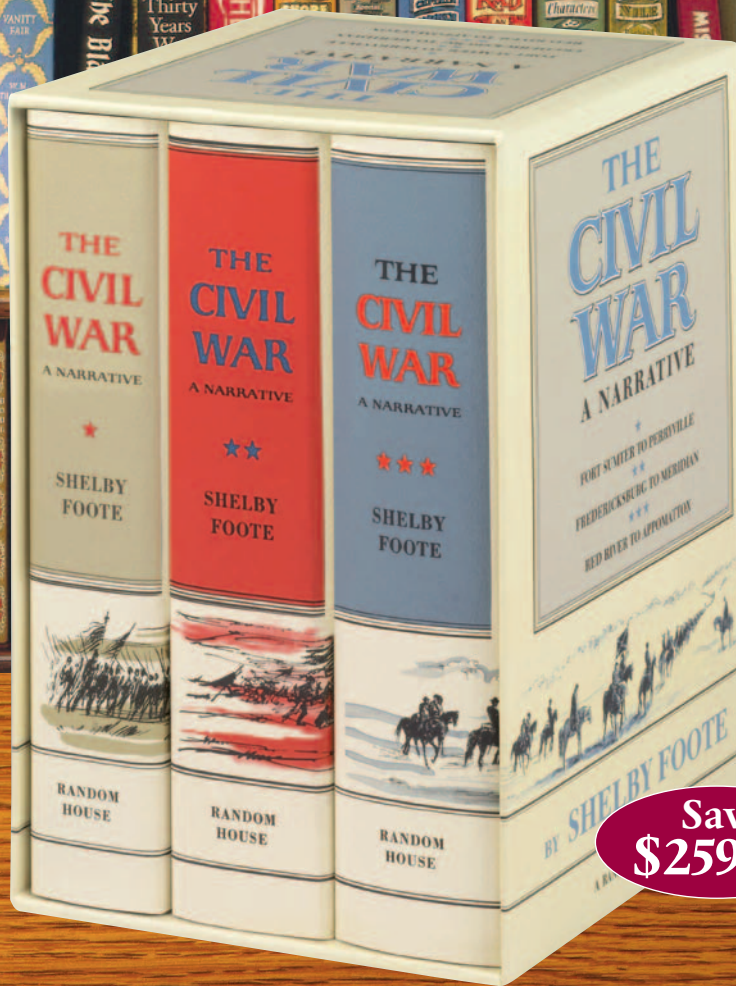
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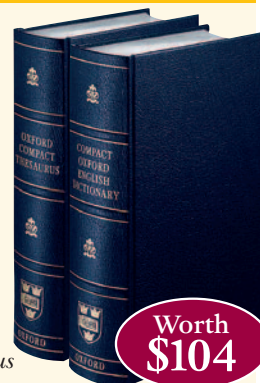
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